**Aerobic and Anaerobic exercise: What is the Difference?**

October 24, 2012 - Written by Barbara Gibson

[14](http://www.fitness19.com/aerobic-and-anaerobic-exercise-what-is-the-difference/)

Most often when we think about exercise we think aerobic. That is in part because of the high energy classes available at most gyms. Aerobic exercise is not confined to those classes, however. For most people, low to moderate exercise or exertion is generally aerobic. So what is the difference between aerobic and anaerobic exercise? In the simplest terms the difference comes down to the oxygen. With aerobic exercise oxygen is carried through your breath to the muscles giving them the energy needed to sustain the effort. Oxygen is not present with anaerobic exercise.

**Aerobic Exercise**



Exercise requires energy. When we exercise aerobically our bodies use glycogen and fat as fuel. This low to moderate level of exertion can be sustained over long periods. As you breathe more heavily with exertion carbon dioxide is expelled from your body. Lactic acid is not produced as it is with anaerobic exercise.

**Benefits of Aerobic Exercise**

It is difficult to overstate the benefits of aerobic exercise. It not only improves overall health and quality of life, but may also extend your life. Aerobic exercise burns fat, improves mood, strengthens the heart and lungs and reduces your risk of diabetes.

 **Types of Aerobic Exercise**

Common types of aerobic exercise include running at a comfortable pace (you should be able to talk without breathing too hard), swimming, and biking.

**Anaerobic Exercise**

Oxygen is not present with anaerobic exercise. When we exercise anaerobically glycogen is used as fuel. Once all the glycogen has been depleted (usually in about two hours) you can expect to hit the proverbial wall. Endurance athletes avoid this performance buster with carbo loading before exercise (which when converted to sugar gives more energy) and supplements during exercise to sustain energy.

During anaerobic exercise your body builds up lactic acid, which causes discomfort and fatigue at sustained levels. For this reason anaerobic exercise or high intensity exercise happens in short bursts. It may be helpful to consider the difference between a sprinter (anaerobic) and a marathoner (aerobic). Sprinting is an all-out effort that is sustained for a comparatively short period while marathoning is a sustained effort.

**Benefits of Anaerobic Exercise**

Anaerobic exercise helps build lean muscle mass. Calories are burned more efficiently in bodies that have more muscle. Anaerobic exercise is especially helpful for weight management in that it helps to burn more calories even in a body at rest. Anaerobic exercise can also help build endurance and fitness levels.

**Types of Anaerobic Exercise**

Anaerobic exercise is very high intensity or at your maximum level of exertion. Examples include sprinting and weight lifting.

Consider using intervals, aerobic with some bursts of anaerobic exercise mixed in periodically to improve weight loss and overall fitness.