

Best Elliptical Machines For Home

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Here's Why You Should Hop On An Elliptical Machine ASAP



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Don't knock it till you've tried it. Heard that before? Well that's the case for the elliptical machine. Ellipticals tend to get a bad rap, but as trainer and nutrition coach, [Adam Rosante](#), explains, it's undeserved for this misunderstood machine. "Listen," he says, "the elliptical may not be 'sexy,' but it still has the potential to help people get in shape. And that's all that matters." And he's right.

What Is The Elliptical?

First, it helps to understand exactly what the elliptical machine is. The elliptical is mostly a

cardio machine, but most have an adjustable resistance. And depending on how much resistance you put on the machine, you can add some strength elements into the mix. Plus, the machine is extremely low-impact, so it's great for anyone with joint issues, or individuals coming back from an injury. "With rehab, you're looking to strengthen an injured area by gaining back balance and stability first, then strength," explains [Kenny Santucci](#), NASM, trainer at [Solace](#) in New York City. "The fact that the elliptical machine is designed to rotate and glide through movement with no impact makes it perfect to do just that."

And that doesn't just mean joint issues or injuries for older individuals. This machine doesn't discriminate. Even athletes like marathoner Meb Keflezighi have been known to use the elliptical (or his [ElliptiGo](#)) for lower-impact exercise. "For runners, especially professional ones like Meb, who runs approximately 110 to 120 miles a week, the elliptical is a great way to keep cardio up but at the same time take a little impact off," explains [Luke Lombardo](#), RRCA certified running coach, Ironman triathlete, master trainer for [Lagree Fitness](#). "It keeps you in shape, so that when you're ready to run again, you haven't lost much speed."

What Muscles Does The Elliptical Work?

As mentioned above, the elliptical is mainly a low-impact cardio workout. You're working the lower body with each stride, but you can bring the upper body into play as well if you use the mobile arm handles (as opposed to the stationary ones), which force you to push and pull your arms in time with your stride. And you can also up the resistance on the machine if you want to add an element of strength into your cardio routine. "If designed properly, between high and low resistance, and explosive bursts of effort followed by recovery, you can create a HIIT-esque, or high intensity interval training type workout on the elliptical," says Lombardo.

Want to incorporate the core more? Take your hands off the handlebars completely, suggests Lombardo. "It takes a lot of balance and core strength to go fast without hand bar support," he says.

The elliptical machine is designed to mimic exercises like running and climbing but without the blunt trauma that those can cause to your joints. "If you're short on time but need a full body workout, the elliptical is perfect," says Santucci.

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What Are The Different Types Of Ellipticals Available?

For starters, it's good to know the difference between the elliptical trainer and the elliptical cross trainer. An elliptical trainer just uses the lower body and has stationary handlebars. On the contrary, the elliptical cross trainer brings the upper body into the mix thanks to its moving handlebars, creating more of a full-body workout.

Then comes the resistance and incline. Some machines offer a variety of resistance and incline levels, while others have limited options. The incline can be adjusted either manually or electronically, depending on the machine.

Pedal size, stride length and the position of the flywheel—front, center, or rear—also vary depending on the elliptical. The best way to know which works for you is to try different options and find out which you're comfortable using.

Related: [Here's Everything You Need To Know About Stationary Exercise Bikes](#)

What Should You Look For When Buying An Elliptical?

Elliptical machines are practical, but they're not inexpensive. While there are a variety of price points, if you're going to purchase a machine, it's important to pay attention to certain things. Tom Holland, [Nautilus Inc.](#), fitness advisor shared some important things to keep in mind when looking to buy an elliptical.

Size: "Ellipticals can vary widely in their size, including both how long they are and how much clearance you need for your head when you stand on it," says Holland. "If you have a specific location in your house or apartment where you plan to put it, especially if it's in a basement area with a low ceiling and you are a tall person, make sure it—and you— will fit."

Cost: "Ellipticals can vary widely in price, costing anywhere from a few hundred to several thousand dollars or more," says Holland. He suggests spending as much as you can to invest in your health, noting that some less expensive models can be noisy, less sturdy, not operate as smoothly and may break down more easily and require repairs. "Most companies offer financing and extended warranties, so be sure to look into these options," he says.

Related: [Here's The Best Cardio Machine You've Been Ignoring](#)

Features: "Thanks to the explosion in fitness technology there have never been more options available on your elliptical machine, including heart rate, Bluetooth connectivity, connectivity to social media and fitness app platforms, numerous built-in workout programs, varying incline levels, cooling fans, video monitors and more," says Holland. "Spend time deciding exactly what you need, ensuring that you both have what you want and aren't paying for features you will never use."

Feel: "If it's possible to try out a number of ellipticals first, by all means do so," suggests Holland. How does it feel? Do you like the foot motion, the way the handles feel, the ease of using the console? "There is no better way to determine what you like than by trying out a number of different options in person and comparing the overall feel," says Holland. "Don't necessarily go by other people's personal recommendations. It's what you like that counts."

We Recommend

Interested in buying an elliptical to use at home or maybe even in your office? Here are some of our favorites currently available, prices from least to most expensive.

NordicTrack FreeStride Trainer FS5i

□ Instead of having pedals locked into a predetermined stride length, this elliptical allows you to decide how long you want your stride to be. Integrate the display with the company's iFit program, which allows you to create your own custom workouts. It also connects to Google Maps, so you can work out all over the world climbing up and down different types of terrain. [\\$1,299.00 at NordicTrack.com](#)

Bowflex Max Trainer M7

□ Yes, it's expensive. But when you purchase this machine, you also get eight free weeks of streaming workouts from DailyBurn. According to the company, users can burn up to 600 calories in 30 minutes, depending on intensity and resistance. The machine itself comes with 11 pre-programmed workouts and has 20 levels of resistance. You can set and track your progress on your phone with the compatible Max Trainer app. [\\$2,199.00 at Amazon.com](#)

Sunny Health & Fitness SF-E3609 Elliptical Machine

□ If you're looking not to spend much, you've found your match. This bare bones magnetic elliptical lets you know how long you've been working out, as well as speed, distance, calories burned, pulse and it has an odometer. It calculates calories burned using your heart rate, which is taken through the sensors on the handles. You can pay extra to have someone come assemble the machine, too. [\\$207.99 at Amazon.com](#)

Stamina InMotion Compact Strider

□ Sit healthier with this strider. Place it under your desk at work or in front of your couch at home and burn calories while you're relaxing. You have the option to get it with or without resistance cords, which can only up the calorie burn. Use the strider while standing, too, if you prefer. It has a handle so you can easily move it around. [\\$93.94 without resistance cords, \\$139.00 with cords at Amazon.com](#)

ProForm Smart Strider 735 Elliptical Trainer

□ Adjust the incline on this elliptical trainer to a level that challenges you, then choose from 20 different resistance levels to really pump up the burn. It has a built-in fan to help keep you cool, a water bottle holder, as well as oversized pedals to fit the feet of everyone in your family. Plus, it's compatible with 22 different workout apps! [\\$819.99 at Amazon.com](#)

Sole Fitness E35 Elliptical Machine

□ Adjust the pedal and console setting to a comfortable fit for you. This machine comes with six

pre-programmed workouts, two custom options, and two heart rate-based programs. The LCD screen allows you to track your workout, while the handles take your pulse on any of the 20 different resistance levels.

[\\$1989.00 at Amazon.com](#)

Technogym Cross Personal Elliptical

□ Transportation of this glass, aluminum, and steel device as well as assembly are included in the hefty price tag. The display slows you to see the work you're doing, browse the internet, or even Skype with family or maybe even your trainer. Use the handles to the heart rate monitor to track how hard you're working. The machine also has built-in surround sound so you can get lots in your tunes.

[\\$13,195.00 at Technogym.com](#)

Elliptical Workouts To Try

Luke Lombardo's Elliptical Workout

Instructions: Workout is based on an elliptical with 10 resistance levels. If yours has 20, just multiply by 2.

5-minute warm up (intensity: conversational warm up levels 1-3)

3 x 60-second intervals of high intensity (levels 6-8) followed by 60 second recoveries (levels 1-3)

3 x 45 second intervals (levels 7-9) , 60 second recoveries (levels 1-3)

3 x 30 second at heart rate max/highest intensity (levels 8-10) 60 second recoveries (levels 1-3)

2 to 3-minute easy cool down (level 1-3), level 1 after

Related: [Here's Why You Should Hope On An Elliptical Next Time You're In The Gym](#)

Kenny Santucci's Elliptical Workout

Set the timer to 30-45 mins

Set the workout to interval

Set the intensity to anywhere from level 6-12

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