

Hula Hoop Workouts Burn Calories

Study: Exercise With a Weighted Hoop About as Intense as Boot Camp, Step Aerobics

By Brenda Goodman, MA

FROM THE WEBMD ARCHIVES 

Feb. 11, 2011 -- Working out with a hula hoop burns about as many calories per minute as step aerobics, boot camp, or very brisk walking, a new study shows.

For the study, researchers recruited 16 women between the ages of 16 and 59 and had them learn a 30-minute aerobics routine that uses weighted hula hoops twirled around the waist, arms, and legs.

After two practice sessions to get familiar with the moves, volunteers wore portable oxygen analyzers and heart rate monitors to record their exertion.

Hooping It Up

The study participants' average heart rate was a brisk 151 beats per minute, about 84% of their age-predicted maximum heart rates. Their average oxygen consumption was about 20 milliliters per kilogram per minute, resulting in about 7 calories burned for each minute of hooping, or about 210 calories burned in a half-hour class.

"We were very surprised, actually," says study researcher John Porcari, PhD, an exercise physiologist at the University of Wisconsin, La Crosse. "You think of hula hooping as just a recreational thing that kids do. 150 is a pretty high heart rate."

The study was sponsored by the American Council on Exercise(ACE).

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"The findings from our commissioned study indicate that hooping delivers a total-body workout that can improve flexibility and balance while strengthening the back, abdominal, arm, and leg muscles," says Cedric X. Bryant, PhD, chief scientific officer of ACE.

Pogo Sticks Better?

Proponents of another retro toy turned fitness fad, the pogo stick, say they are not impressed.

"There have been many, many controlled studies that concluded pogo jumping is the most effective form of exercise, aerobic and otherwise," says Irwin Arginsky, president of SBI enterprises in Ellenville, N.Y., a company that sells pogo sticks.

"Better even than jump ropes or hula hoops," Arginsky tells WebMD.

Researchers say there's one important caveat; the study used weighted fitness hula hoops, which can be ordered online, rather than the lightweight plastic hoops sold at toy stores.

Weighted hoops, the researchers say, may actually be easier to use because they rotate more slowly around the body.

WebMD Health News | Reviewed by Laura J. Martin, MD on February 10, 2011

[Sources](#) ^

SOURCES:

American Council on Exercise: "ACE-sponsored Research: Hooping – Effective Workout or Child's Play?"

Irwin Arginsky, president, SBI enterprises, Ellenville, N.Y.

John Porcari, PhD, exercise physiologist, University of Wisconsin, La Crosse.

News release, American Council on Exercise.

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