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Healthy Living



Wii for Weight Loss: Exercise Games vs. Gym Workouts

Posted by [Jennifer L. Nelson](#) on December 11, 2010 at 9:55 AM

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These days, when kids play **popular video games** for systems like the [Nintendo Wii](#), they strap a remote to their wrist and move their lookalike avatar on the screen by **getting up and moving their bodies**.

It came as no surprise when **fitness-inspired Wii games** targeted toward adults started hitting the market. These video games promise to help you **slim down, tone up, and lose weight**, all in the comfort of your own home ... and in your jammies, if you wish.

That's why when I got my Wii, I invested in some **exercise games** and stocked up on balance boards, wrist weights, jump ropes, and other Wii-compatible fitness accessories. But I had to wonder: are **video game workouts** really as

effective as **old-fashioned gym sessions**?

So I put them the comparison to the test. Read on and I'll tell you **how Wii exercise games matched up against gym workouts** ...

Pounding the treadmill for 45 minutes every day was getting to be a snooze; what better way to make working out enjoyable again than with **exercise video games**? Fun! Plus, the [Wii balance board functions as a scale](#), so games like Wii Fit can track your **weight loss progress**, calculate your **BMI**, and tell you whether or not you're overweight (yeah, that part's not so fun).

I wanted to give a game like [The Biggest Loser Challenge](#) the benefit of the doubt, especially since it claims to **deliver workouts** that mirror those the contestants endure on ranch. But I also needed to determine if playing video games was worth my time and energy. Most of us can barely find the time to carve out a **30-minute workout**, so you don't want to waste your time on something that will prove ineffective at **helping burn calories** or **build muscle**. I strapped on my heart rate monitor and put some of these **virtual workouts** to the test.

Unfortunately, I have some bad news for my hopeful video game junkies.

Despite burning roughly 10 calories/minute when I'm doing more traditional cardio like running, biking, or using the elliptical, I had to fight just to **keep my heart rate up** long enough to burn half that when tackling some of the **Wii Fit workouts** or completing even the "moderate-" or "high-intensity" full-body workouts in *The Biggest Loser* game. I was lucky to clock in at 200 calories burned for 30 minutes of gaming.

However, I saw little difference between **doing push-ups with the Wii** and doing them at the gym as far as my heart rate (and muscle soreness) were concerned. So I'd say the strength-training moves are more effective than the aerobic exercises.

I don't care what anyone says: **running in place** is *not* the same as **running on a treadmill** or outdoors.

This isn't to say that the games won't make you **break a sweat** or help you get **back into your skinny jeans**; exercises like mountain climbers and lunges still kill me -- and even more so when a virtual [Jillian Michaels](#) is barking at me. The trouble is that there can be an awful lot of down time between exercises. I have to keep stopping to move the remote from my wrist to my pocket, or the game spends too much time explaining movements and not enough time prompting you to do them.

Admittedly, I think I'm most of the problem. I've learned that I work way harder when I'm at the gym and surrounded by big buffed men and teeny tiny toned women who I'm convinced are paying me more attention than they actually are. In the interest of maintaining appearances, I push myself a

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whole lot harder than I do at home ... when nobody's there to judge me except my Shih Tzu.

If you're looking to **get off the couch** and start moving once and for all, investing in a Wii and a couple of fitness games is a great first step. For those of us who get bored with the same exercise routine, working in a video game day or two each week is the perfect way to break up the monotony and challenge new muscles.

Games like [Dance Dance Revolution](#) or [Gold's Gym Dance Workout](#) will get your heart pumping, and they're so much fun that you actually forget you're exercising. Yogis can enjoy their own personal practice session with the press of a button, and even hardcore athletes can engage in conditioning and high-intensity drills with games like [EA Sports Active 2](#) or their [NFL Training Camp](#).

Still, I'm not canceling my gym membership any time soon.

What do you think of exercise video games? Do you get just as good a workout as when you go to the gym or head outdoors for a walk or run?

Image via [enfad/Flickr](#)

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I think they are GREAT!!! It's nice to do it in the privacy of your own home.

Carey2006, Dec 11, 2010 at 11:33 AM



I give credit to anything that gets you up and moving. It's hard to loss weight and if workout via a video game works for you, so be it. Personally, I enjoy doing workout videos and using machines myself., but I was never that involved with video games to start off with.

Just move, do something, everything else will follow.

aeclarke, Dec 11, 2010 at 12:26 PM



I think they're fun, but would never consider them a substitute to an actual workout. I suppose if it's the only way to get your butt off the couch, go for it. But if you're really looking for results, don't waste time playing a game about exercise -

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exercise!!!!

hoticedcoffee, Dec 11, 2010 at 2:35 PM



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*Nonmember comment from **Greg**, Dec 11, 2010 at 5:20 PM*



If you want a great workout buy a kinect and get the fighters uncaged game as well as the dance game. Heck even the adventures game that comes with it will get your booty moving!! IDc what anyone says playing kinect will burn a ton of calories and get your heart rate up plenty. And i'm a runner saying so.

knfisch, Dec 12, 2010 at 5:19 PM



I was wondering about the wii balance board. Think I prefer my gym workouts definitely now.

Just2busymom, Dec 12, 2010 at 7:08 PM



I have never used a game system to lose weight.

tazdvl, Dec 12, 2010 at 8:39 PM



I have been following Commando for some time and from the fence and have tried some of the exercises. They seem like a good fit for me and are quite challenging, and I think I am ready to purchase one program or the other (e.g TF Commando or the newer TF Warrior). I wondered if you would please comment on any differences. I am interested in some aspects of both programs. How are they different? My interest is for general fitness and martial arts. Appreciate whatever comments you can offer, and thanks for such extensive reviews. Happy Holidays

*Nonmember comment from **AnnoggEls**, Dec 17, 2010 at 12:29 PM*



I would prefer to use the Wii

fryshannon34, Jan 4, 2011 at 9:35 AM

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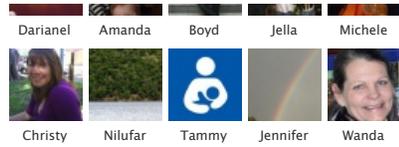
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