



So you've decided to purchase a home treadmill—congratulations! Whether it's part of a new commitment to fitness, an upgrade from a previous model or you simply want to improve your cardiovascular health, a treadmill can help you reach your goals in many different ways.

The best-selling fitness equipment in the industry, treadmills are widely popular due to their convenience and proven results, burning more calories per hour than any other machine. They're much easier on the body than an outdoor workout (where you must also take weather conditions into consideration), with greater shock absorption than asphalt or other concrete surfaces and less stress on your knees and joints. Most treadmills will offer many different terrains and challenges, from rolling hills to weight loss to endurance building. **LIVESTRONG Fitness treadmills** also offer a power incline feature that allows you to run or walk at a variety of inclines and get better, faster results.

Due to their popularity, there are more options and models of treadmills than ever before, which can make the buying process overwhelming and often confusing. The following guide will explain which features to look for so you can find the best treadmill for your goals and money.



WHAT TREADMILL WORKS FOR YOU?

Before you determine which treadmill to buy, stop and ask yourself, what kind of treadmill will work best for me? Several factors come into play when choosing the most appropriate treadmill that will combine the features you want, the quality you need, and the space and budget limitations you're working within.

When you first walk into a store, most salespeople will help you begin your search by narrowing down these factors, so taking them into consideration before you start the shopping process will make your treadmill-buying experience easier and faster. The first things to consider:

1 Budget

How much can you spend? This is the most basic and important way to narrow down your search. You can generally find high quality treadmills at lower- to mid-range price points that give you affordable quality at every level, with added features and benefits the higher the price point.

2 Goals

What is your motivation for purchasing a home treadmill? Do you want to lose weight? Start a walking program? How frequently will your goals require you to use the machine? Determining what you want to achieve will tell you which features and type of treadmill to look for.

3 Space

Where will you use the treadmill? Do you have a dedicated home gym space or will you need to move the treadmill around? Treadmills with folding frames give you more flexibility if you have tight space limitations and will need to store the unit before and after your workout.

4 Users

Who will be using the treadmill? Will it just be you? Your family? The number of users and frequency of use are very important considerations when you look at the durability, frame and warranty of a prospective treadmill.

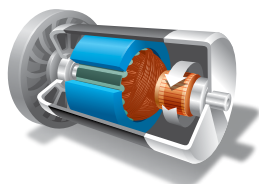


SHOPPING FOR A TREADMILL — WHAT'S IMPORTANT?

As we mentioned earlier, sorting through the huge array of treadmills on the market today can be a daunting and confusing task. There are lots of things to look at when strolling through the fitness equipment section at a sporting goods store, and many different features are advertised all over the place. Heavy-duty motor. Easy-to-fold. Multi-window display. Heart rate grips. It can be difficult to know what to look for, but the bottom line is you want to first find something that will last and will sustain your workouts, then sort out which features you will need to stay focused and motivated. Quality trumps bells and whistles when it comes to finding a treadmill that will give you the most bang for your buck. Here are the things you should pay the most attention to:

1 Treadmill Drive System – Look What's “Under the Hood”

The most important part of the treadmill, the drive system accounts for the majority of a treadmill cost, but because it is located under the front hood, is hidden from consumers. The benefits of a good drive system greatly influence the overall treadmill experience, so you'll want to be sure you get a machine that is powerful, quiet, durable and smooth. The main components of a drive system are:



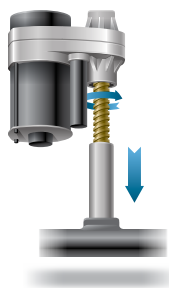
DRIVE MOTOR

This is the source of power that moves the belt forward during the workout. Motor performance is measured in two ways: the revolutions of the motor axle per minute (RPM), and the power output, expressed as horsepower.

A low-RPM motor is able to deliver an exceptional amount of horsepower with fewer revolutions around the axle, which make it quieter and less stressful on the motor so it is likely to last longer.

HORSEPOWER is generated by drive motor magnets that create a magnetic field through which the axle spins to create power. You can increase horsepower in two ways: 1) increase the RPM, or 2) increase the size of the drive motor magnets to generate even more power per revolution. Larger magnets keep the motor quiet, and the motor does not work as hard to deliver as much power as a high-RPM motor delivering the same horsepower.

LIVESTRONG Fitness treadmills measure horsepower at a **continuous-duty rating**, derived from operating the treadmill at the lowest RPM possible. This is the commercial-grade standard used for health club and higher-quality home treadmills. Always look for treadmills that report a continuous-duty rating (abbreviated as CHP) over a standard treadmill-duty rating (THP), which only rates the amount of power used at an average treadmill workout.



INCLINE MOTOR

An incline motor is the component that raises and lowers the deck for incline levels. Look for a treadmill that uses direct thrust power to lift the deck, rather than a leverage system. Direct thrust is powerful enough to lift and lower your weight without strain, and operates quietly because it does not have to work as hard.

Be sure to consider the **warranties** associated with the treadmill, for both the drive system and parts and labor. Motors should ideally be covered by lifetime warranties, which tells you that the product is built to last and will have less need for maintenance down the road. For parts and labor, look for a warranty that offers at least 1 year of unlimited parts replacement and in-home labor repairs. This tells you a lot about the integrity behind the manufacturer and their products.



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2 Treadmill Suspension System – Stability, Comfort and Support

The feel of the treadmill is extremely important, and you'll want to go for at least a few test runs to make sure the treadmill will withstand the intensity of your workout, provide the right amount of shock absorption, and give you the amount of space you need to comfortably walk, jog or run. Pay close attention to the following items:

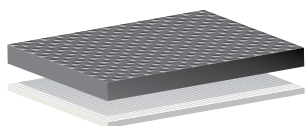


FRAME

When you step onto a treadmill, you get a sense of how solid and stable it feels. Much of this is determined by the size and weight of the frame; the larger and heavier it is, the more stable it will feel, and won't rattle or bounce as you work out. A treadmill frame should also be protected with a lifetime warranty and built to last.

FOLDING VS. NON-FOLDING

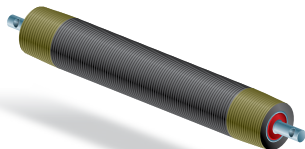
A folding treadmill is a great space-saving feature on many treadmills, and allows for easy storage, moving and maintenance. LIVESTRONG Fitness treadmills also feature a hydraulic-assisted lift to reduce the weight of the deck both when the treadmill is being raised and lowered.



RUNNING BELT AND DECK

The running belt on any treadmill should be long enough to accommodate any walking, jogging or running stride, but not too large that it's difficult to straddle the deck comfortably if you need to get off quickly. A 20" belt width is preferred for most users, while a 17"-wide belt may be adequate for smaller users or walkers. A spacious belt also provides ample margin for error during the workout.

You should also look for multi-ply belts, which consist of multiple rubber plies for enhanced durability. The thicker the deck, the longer it will last. It should be at least 8-inch thick, and lubricated at the factory to limit friction.

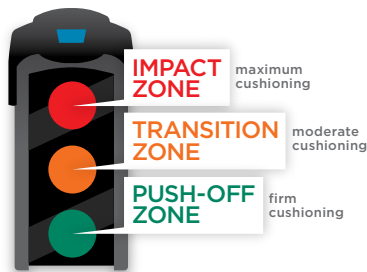


ROLLERS

Rollers work with the running belt to move you forward during your workout, keeping it aligned and minimizing friction. Make sure your treadmill has tapered rollers, which are greater in diameter in the center, and support greater alignment and less strain on the motor. Tapered rollers minimize the need to adjust the belt, enhance the efficiency of the workout and extend the life of the treadmill.

CUSHIONING

The treadmill's cushioning system can be found between the belt and frame. These can range from very basic (one area of cushioning) to premium (multiple cushioning zones). The best systems provide variable cushioning under different parts of the belt: maximum cushioning at the front impact zone, moderate cushioning in the middle transition zone, and firm cushioning in the back push-off zone. More zones and thicker cushioning provide more support for each part of your stride, and faster recovery between workouts.





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3 Treadmill Console System—The Extras You Need, and Navigating Through Them

While the drive and suspension systems are the real focus of a quality treadmill, you also want an easy-to-use machine that will give you fun and motivating features to enhance your workout, while providing clear and accurate results.

The electronic console system controls all aspects of the treadmill and determines how easy it will be to use. Consider these three key areas:

BASIC OPERATION

The console's main function is to control the treadmill operation. Better treadmills will offer more sophisticated features but also simplify operation with quick keys. The operation should be clear and easy to understand throughout your entire workout. Step on a machine and navigate through the programs and keys to make sure you are comfortable with the console and won't have a problem understanding how to use it.

FEEDBACK

Treadmills help monitor your workout progress. This information should be easy to view during your workout. Higher-quality treadmills will provide more feedback options, such as heart rate and performance data tracking.

PROGRAMMING

Treadmills provide an opportunity to use workout programs designed for specific fitness goals. Higher-quality treadmills give you more preset workout program options. Depending on what your goals are and your motivation for purchasing a treadmill, you'll want to choose a machine that offers challenging programs for meeting longer-term goals and keeping your workouts fresh and varied. If you want to train for a race, add more terrain variety to your run, tone muscle, build stamina or target weight loss—or simply get on and go—look for programs that address these goals specifically. If you can't find more information on programming in-store, check the product website for more detailed descriptions.

Features like iPod- or MP3-compatibility let you connect your audio device to the console and work out to your favorite playlists through included speakers, and workout fans will provide added comfort to help keep you going. For meeting specific, long-term goals, features like workout tracking will allow you to upload your workouts online, so all your data is easily accessible and you can track your progress at any time.

