What is Zone 2 cardio?

Easy cardio is good for your heart, your energy and a long life. Here is the right pace.

Slower than you think

Most people do their cardio too hard. They hate it, and they stop. Zone 2 is easy and steady. You can keep it up for a long time and still talk.

How to find it

Use the talk test. You can speak in full sentences. If you can sing, go a little harder. If you can only gasp out words, ease off.

What it does

Your heart pumps more blood with each beat. Your resting heart rate drops. Hills get easier. Aerobic fitness is also strongly linked to living longer.

How much

Two or three sessions of 30 to 45 minutes a week. With your daily walking, aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate activity a week. That is the World Health Organization's guideline. Brisk walking, cycling, rowing, swimming and easy jogging all count.

New to this? Start with walking. Walk to lose weight builds you up week by week. Ready to run? Try Run your first 5K.

SOURCES

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3. Kodama S et al. (2009). Cardiorespiratory fitness as a quantitative predictor of all-cause mortality and cardiovascular events in healthy men and women: a meta-analysis. JAMA.
4. Bull FC et al. (2020). World Health Organization 2020 guidelines on physical activity and sedentary behaviour. British Journal of Sports Medicine.
5. Lang JJ et al. (2024). Cardiorespiratory fitness is a strong and consistent predictor of morbidity and mortality among adults: an overview of meta-analyses representing over 20.9 million observations from 199 unique cohort studies. British Journal of Sports Medicine.

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