



Advice on cardiovascular exercise

If you're a complete beginner walking is, without doubt, the cheapest, easiest and safest way to get fit. Start gently and aim to walk at a pace that is comfortable for you, one which makes you feel slightly warm and slightly out of breath, but still able to talk. Plan a route that is circular, safe, preferably flat, and ideally interesting. Don't worry too much about the distance – as you become fitter you will be able to walk further in the same time. Walking is a very safe form of exercise, so you won't necessarily need to warm up unless you're doing morning walks or longer, faster walks.

We've designed a 12-week programme so you can build up over the weeks. If the first week feels too easy, start at the level of week three or four. If you're struggling repeat a week until you're ready to move on. You must complete the full 12 weeks. By your twelfth week you should be doing 150 minutes' moderate exercise – that's about half an hour for five days a week – wherever you were at the start. You can download a 12-week walking plan in the exercise section of The 2-Day Diet website. If you would prefer to start running there is also a New to Running plan you can download instead.

Monitor your cardiovascular progress

It is important to monitor yourself, to ensure that you are exercising at the right intensity and that you are exercising safely.

The Talk Test is a simple way to check that you're working at the right level. You should be a little breathless, but still able to hold a conversation. If you're struggling to talk in sentences, you're overdoing it and need to slow down. The Rate of Perceived Exertion (RPE) is a numerical scale from 1 to 10 (with 1 being the lowest intensity and 10 the highest) that you can use while exercising to gauge how you are feeling and know whether you need to speed up or slow down to get you training at the right intensity.

- 0 = No exertion at all 1 = Very, very light exertion 2 = Very light exertion
3 = Light exertion 4 = Moderate exertion
5 = Somewhat hard (you need to make an effort to maintain a conversation)
6 = Hard 7 = Very hard 8 = Very, very hard 9 = Extremely hard