

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is cardiovascular fitness?

Cardiovascular fitness is an important component of overall physical fitness and is defined as the body's maximal ability to use oxygen at the cellular level during exercise. Several terms are interchangeable with cardiovascular fitness such as aerobic power, aerobic capacity and maximal oxygen consumption. The latter term—often abbreviated max as VO_2 —is the maximal volume of oxygen the body can utilize during a specified period of intense exercise.

What is a cardiovascular fitness test?

The CooperFit™ cardiovascular fitness test provides an accurate and validated prediction of fitness level based on predicted max VO_2 . The CooperFit cardiovascular fitness test is not intended to be a diagnostic test for cardiovascular disease. Based on more than 50 years of evaluation and fitness testing at Cooper Clinic, predicted max VO_2 is used to provide your level of cardiovascular fitness in one of six categories and percentile ranking (1-100%).

Superior (95-100%)

Excellent (80-94%)

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Good (60-79%)

Fair (40-59%)

Poor (20-39%)

Very Poor (0-19%)

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How is my cardiovascular fitness level calculated?

Fitness categories are calculated by using the results from participation in the CooperFit test in conjunction with age and gender.

A CooperFit test is conducted by completing a:

- One-mile walk
- OR
- 12-minute run

Based on your current level of exercise or lack of exercise, the CooperFit tech will select the test option that is most applicable for you.

The test is performed on a treadmill using a heart rate monitor. Your performance is used to calculate a predicted max VO_2 that provides an age and gender-specific percentile ranking.

If the fitness score is in the Poor or Very Poor category, a Cooper developed and certified basic walking program is provided to improve or maintain a beneficial level of fitness.

CooperFit™

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What is the significance of my cardiovascular fitness level?

Research demonstrates that improving fitness level beyond the Very Poor category can decrease your risk of dying from all causes by 58%, decrease chronic disease risk, decrease health care costs and improve symptom-related quality of life factors. Your fitness level is a valuable piece of health information. In fact, Cooper Aerobics and American Heart Association consider it a vital sign of health.

Who should take the CooperFit test?

The CooperFit test is best designed for use between 20 and 70 years of age. However, regular fitness is important for all ages. All CooperFit participants should be able to walk or run without significant difficulty, be cleared to exercise by their physician and qualify under the medical release form.

How do I prepare for my cardiovascular fitness test?

Refrain from caffeine, alcohol, tobacco, vaping and eating a heavy meal for at least 4 hours prior to testing. Do not exercise vigorously on the day of your test. Hydrate adequately before your appointment. Dress in comfortable, easy-to-move-in clothing. Wear proper footwear for physical activity. If you take heart medication such as beta blockers, ask your physician if you should refrain from taking it for one day prior to your test.

How do I improve my cardiovascular fitness level?

The first step in improving your cardiovascular fitness is to achieve consistency in exercise. Select an exercise that is meaningful and enjoyable to you. If you are beginning an exercise program, begin slowly and gradually increase your amount each week. You can perform your exercise all in one session or break it up into smaller segments throughout the day.

For substantial health benefits, 150 minutes or more of moderate-intensity cardiovascular exercise or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity cardiovascular exercise per week are recommended. Moderate-intensity is defined as 12-14 Rate of Perceived Exertion (RPE) and vigorous-intensity is defined as 15-18 RPE. Refer to the RPE scale on the following page. It is advised to spread out your minutes through the week instead of accumulating them all in just one day.

When should I test again?

For those in the Very Poor or Poor categories of fitness, the recommended time between fitness tests is 12 weeks. Keep in mind, it may take as long as 12-16 weeks to see an improvement in your cardiovascular fitness level. During this time, follow the exercise program given to you by the CooperFit tech and track your progress.

"Our method of fitness evaluation has been the backbone of our practice since 1970."

- Tyler C. Cooper, MD, MPH, President and CEO, Cooper Aerobics



BORG SCALE OF PERCEIVED EXERTION

