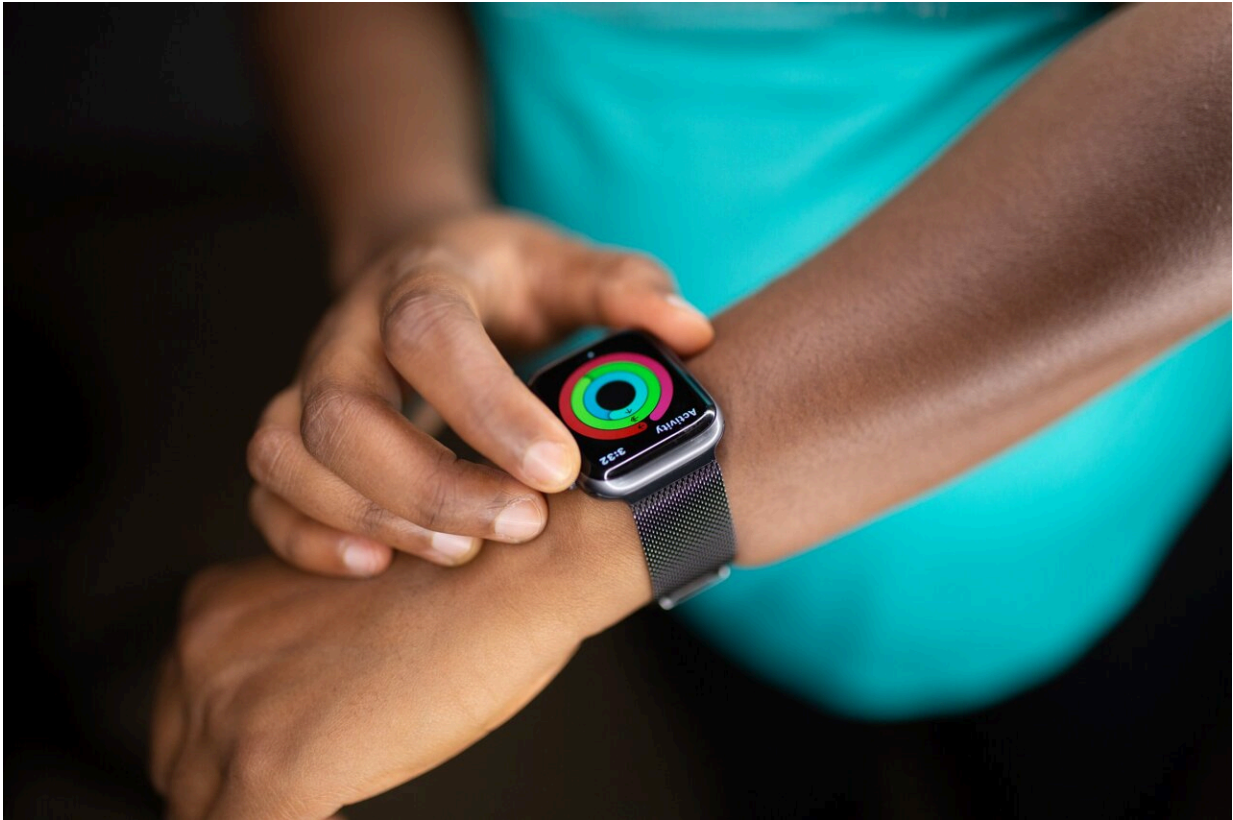


# Interval training for heart health

February 2 2023, by Dan Lea

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Credit: Unsplash/CC0 Public Domain

When it comes to exercise, what's best for your heart: slow and steady, or fast and furious?

How about a combination of both? Interval [training](#)—alternating short bouts of higher-intensity effort with longer bouts of less-intense

activity—has big benefits for your [heart](#).

"Interval training makes your heart alternate between working hard and recovering," says Melinda Hahm, a clinical exercise physiologist in Cardiology at Mayo Clinic Health System in Eau Claire. "Doing this work-and-recovery pattern multiple times in a single workout has many benefits."

## Benefits of interval training

- Improves cardiorespiratory fitness. This increases your body's ability to consume oxygen by making your heart and lungs stronger and more efficient.
- Increases the efficiency of your body's [energy systems](#).
- Promotes preservation of lean muscle while promoting fat loss.
- Can shorten the length of your workouts by producing the same output in a shorter amount of time.

"If you have a [health condition](#), consult your health care team before increasing or changing your [exercise routine](#)," Hahm says. "If you are starting an [exercise program](#), wait at least two weeks before adding interval training to your routine."

## Interval training plan

To try it yourself, follow this 20- to 40-minute plan.

1. Walk slowly, working up to a moderate pace for five minutes.
2. Increase your speed so that you're walking briskly.
3. After five minutes of brisk walking, increase your speed to jog or walk faster, or add a grade on the treadmill for 30 seconds to two minutes.

4. Once it gets difficult or your breathing becomes heavy, slow down to walking at a moderate pace for one to three minutes.
5. Repeat steps 2, 3 and 4 for 10 to 30 minutes.
6. To cool down, walk at a slower pace for five minutes.

If you're already a runner, alternate jogging and sprinting in steps 2 to 4.

"For general fitness, aim for at least 30 minutes of moderate aerobic exercise most days of the week," Hahm says. "To add interval training to your exercise routine, substitute two to three days of [interval training](#) for your regular workout."

For optimal heart health, also add two to three days of strength training a week. If you do the correct amount of exercise, you should feel good when you finish your workout.

Provided by Mayo Clinic

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