

Cardio Can Feel Good – Here’s How to Make It Work for YOU

Whether you want to feel less huffy-puffy during school drop-offs, walk up a flight of stairs or up a hill without stopping for a “pretend phone check,” or finally ease back into running... cardio doesn’t have to be punishment. In fact, I want it to feel **empowering**.

Let’s chat about how to build your cardio fitness in a **real-life-feel-good way** - no long boring runs if that’s not your vibe, no complicated tech or fancy gadgets if that’s not your thing.

♥ First things first...

This is about choosing the type of movement that feels right for YOU - whether that is walking, brisk walking (aka power walking), jogging or running - it all counts. You’re allowed to adapt it based on your energy, season of life, and what actually feels enjoyable. This is your workout, your pace, your win!

Start With Intervals That Match Your Energy 🎯

Intervals are short bursts of effort that teach your body to adapt and recover = improved fitness, confidence, and endurance without the overwhelm.

Use the “**talk test**” as your guide:

- **Medium pace:** You can talk in a full sentence with one breath. Think power walk or light jog.
- **Fast pace:** You can still talk but need 2–3 breaths to finish a sentence. You’re working but still in control.

LEVEL-UP INTERVAL EXAMPLES ✨

🌿 Level 1: Beginner (Walking + Brisk Walking)

- 1 min easy walk
- 2 min brisk walk
- Repeat 4–5 rounds

🍌 Level 2: Walk + Jog

- 1 min power walk
- 1 min jog
- Repeat 6–8 rounds

Level 3: Jog + Run

- 2 min jog
- 1 min steady run
- Repeat 6–10 rounds

Level 4: Tempo Builder

- 3 min jog
- 2 min run
- 1 min push pace
- Repeat 2–3 rounds

SWITCH IT UP TO KEEP IT FUN

Don't feel stuck with the same times every session! Play around with your intervals to keep things fresh and your body guessing. For example:

- 1 min medium, 2 min fast
- Then 2 min medium, 3 min fast
- Back to 1 min medium, 2 min fast

Or keep it simple and stress-free by using the **SMARTWOD app 'interval timer'** - it's free, easy to use, and will beep to remind you when to switch between intervals. You can keep your music or podcast playing in the background and still get those little nudges to keep moving.

How to set it up: Use the TABATA option and set it up as with 'WORK' being the time you want to set up for the fast pace, and 'REST' being the time you want to set up for the medium pace. Set the 'ROUNDS' to match your time – you will see at the bottom of the screen a 'Start Timer' button and in little writing under it, it will tell you the total time that matches the settings selected eg 5 Rounds+2min Work+1min Rest = 14mins total. Once you tap 'play' to start, the timer kicks in for the first rest aka medium pace set.

ADD SOME HILLS FOR A FITNESS BOOST 🏔️

Slopes are your secret cardio AND strength sauce.

Try this:

- Walk or jog up a hill (or driveway/stairs) for 30–60 seconds
- Walk down slowly for recovery
- Repeat 3–5 times in your session

👉 Want a challenge? Add a 1-2 min brisk flat section after each hill climb before repeating!

Top tip: Hills build your glutes and power safely - perfect for runners and walkers alike.

❤️ POSTNATAL MUMMA? START HERE FIRST

Before jumping into your intervals, let's gently wake up that pelvic floor and core with these simple moves to support you from the inside out.

🌸 Simple Pelvic Floor & Core Warm-Up:

- **Bent Knee Fallouts:**
Lie on your back with knees bent and feet flat. Slowly let one knee fall out to the side while keeping your lower core engaged. Return to center and switch sides.
- **Table Tops:**
On all fours, keep your spine neutral. Focus on turning your T-zone “on” — inhale, gently draw your pelvic floor up towards your tummy button and bring your hips side to side to activate your lower core.
- **Table Tops with Toe Tap (Reverse):**
From all fours, extend one leg back and tap toes lightly on the floor behind you, keeping the core engaged and hips level. Switch sides.
- **Marching with Activation:**
Lie on your back or sit tall. Inhale deeply while drawing your pelvic floor up and pulling your tummy button in, activating your hips side to side (lower core). Exhale with a small movement from ribs to hips to activate your external core muscles. Alternate lifting one leg at a time as you march.

This warm-up takes just 4 minutes (think 1 min each exercise) but sets you up beautifully for confident, supported movement. If you prefer a guided video, then jump into your online membership portal ‘Move Nourish Thrive’ and check out the Core activation cues & warm up video in the Movement Hun (under the Move Smart section).

FEEL-GOOD REMINDERS

- 💧 Hydrate before and after
- 🎵 Play your fav tunes or podcasts
- 🌈 Your “fast” pace is your own – listen to your body
- 👟 Invest in comfy shoes and a good sports bra
- 😊 End with a smile or a stretch (or both!)

Which level or interval combo will you try first? Remember - it's about progress, not perfection. You've got this! ✨