

Is your Cardiovascular System at Risk?

VO₂ testing could be your most important health test.

Cardiovascular Disease (CVD), principally heart disease and stroke, is the Nation's leading killer of both men and women. Almost a million Americans die of CVD each year; that's one person every 30 seconds, or 2,600 people every day. This adds up to 42 percent of all deaths in America. Perhaps the most surprising statistic about heart disease is that it doesn't just kill the elderly—it is the leading cause of death for *ALL* Americans age 35 and older.

What's the root cause? Mainly, it's the lifestyle of the American people. Here's the three leading causes:

Tobacco use. Smokers have twice the risk of heart attack as nonsmokers. One-fifth of the annual 1,000,000 deaths from CVD are attributable to smoking.

Lack of physical activity. This is the second leading cause of heart disease and stroke. Sedentary people have twice the risk of cardiovascular disease as those who are physically active. Despite this, America remains a sedentary society.

Poor Nutrition. Over 60% of Americans are over weight and a third of those are obese.



Will your lifestyle lead to heart disease or stroke?

If you are sedentary, overweight, or a smoker, your cardiovascular system could be at risk, and you could become a statistic. A well-conditioned cardiovascular system has a greater ability to deliver oxygen

to the cells than a poorly conditioned cardiovascular system. In situations where strenuous demands are placed on the heart, such as doing yard work or heavy lifting, the unconditioned heart may not be able to sustain the strain; while a well conditioned heart can endure much longer periods of physical activity without strain¹.

How do you know if your cardiovascular system is in good or poor condition? A simple VO₂ test can give you the answer.

What is VO₂ Testing?

Most people have seen on TV athletes taking a Maximal VO₂ test, commonly known as the VO₂ max test. The person runs on a treadmill with a plastic tube in their mouth. The equipment measures the maximum volume of oxygen the person can use during strenuous physical activity. This type of test is used in sports training to measure the performance of elite athletes.

While VO₂ max testing has its place, it is not necessary to push the average person to maximum levels of exertion to get an accurate measure of cardiovascular endurance. We can take *submaximal* VO₂ using heart rate and estimate what the maximal reading would be if the person continued effort to the maximal level. Submaximal testing is safe and can be performed on just about anyone in any physical condition.

What does it mean?

Knowing your cardiovascular endurance can be a good first step toward taking control over the most important element of your overall fitness and health. People who think they get enough exercise through work and regular daily activity may be surprised to find that this activity is not enough to maintain good cardiovascular health.

How to save your life



- **Get a VO₂ test.** If your result is poor, *take action NOW!*
- **Stop smoking.** Smoking is a cardiovascular killer.
- **Increase physical activity.** To be effective, do this 20 to 60 minutes a day, 3 to 5 days a week. Brisk walking, swimming, jogging, dancing—almost any activity that gets your heart rate up will do the trick.
- **Focus on Proper Diet and Nutrition.** Eat balanced meals in conservative portions.

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¹ Hoeger and Hoeger, *Physical Fitness and Wellness, Forth Edition*, Morton Publishing Company, Englewood, Colorado, 1995.