

VO₂ MAX:

What's Normal, What Matters, & How to Improve It

VO₂ Max by Age: What's Normal and What It Tells You

VO₂ max naturally declines with age, but where you fall within your age group can offer meaningful insight into cardiovascular fitness and long-term health.

<i>VO₂ max ranges — WOMEN (mL/kg/min)</i>			
Age	Below Avg	Avg	Above Avg
20s-30s	< 31	31-38	> 39
40s	< 28	28-35	> 36
50s	< 25	25-32	> 33
60+	< 22	22-30	> 31

<i>VO₂ max ranges — MEN (mL/kg/min)</i>			
Age	Below Avg	Avg	Above Avg
20s-30s	< 35	35-43	> 44
40s	< 31	31-39	> 40
50s	< 28	28-38	> 39
60+	< 25	25-35	> 36

How to use this information

VO₂ max helps guide training decisions, but the most effective approach depends on your baseline, recovery capacity, and overall health.

Workouts That Actually Improve VO₂ Max (and When to Use Them)

Use this checklist to understand which types of movement support VO₂ max.

Aerobic base training

Steady, moderate-intensity movement

- ✓ Builds foundational cardiovascular fitness
- ✓ Improves efficiency and endurance
- ✓ Supports recovery and long-term consistency

This is often helpful if you:

- ✓ Are early in your fitness journey
- ✓ Are returning after time away from exercise
- ✓ Are under higher stress or prioritizing recovery
- ✓ Want a sustainable foundation for long-term health

Interval or high-intensity training

Short bursts of higher effort with recovery

- ✓ Can increase VO₂ max once a base is established
- ✓ Improves how efficiently the body uses oxygen

This may make sense if you:

- ✓ Already have a solid aerobic foundation
- ✓ Can recover well between sessions
- ✓ Use it intentionally rather than daily
- ✓ Are not already feeling overextended

Strength training (supporting role)

Resistance and muscle-building work

- ✓ Supports muscle strength and power
- ✓ Helps reduce injury risk
- ✓ Improves resilience with aging

This is most effective when:

- ✓ Paired with aerobic training
- ✓ Used to support overall performance
- ✓ Integrated into a balanced program
- ✓ Focused on compound, multi-joint movements that build total-body strength

VO₂ max is one signal among many. Sleep, stress, hormones, nutrition, and recovery all influence how it shows up and how it should be interpreted.