

Cardio fitness

Norwegian 4x4 Interval Training Program

Four 4-minute intervals at 85–95% of your max heart rate, with 3 minutes of easy movement between. Developed by Norwegian researchers to raise fitness fast, in about 40 minutes.

Length	Sessions	Time per session	Level	Equipment
8 weeks	2–3 a week	40 min	All levels	Treadmill, bike, rower, ski machine or a steep hill

How the program works

- Work intervals should feel hard: 85–95% of your max heart rate. You can say a few words, but not hold a conversation.
- Recovery is active. Keep moving at an easy pace, about 60–70% of max heart rate, for the full 3 minutes.
- Heart rate rises slowly. Expect to reach the target zone 1–2 minutes into each interval, so do not start too hard.
- Leave at least one day between 4x4 sessions.
- Pick a movement you can push hard safely. Uphill walking or running, cycling, rowing and ski machines all work.

A typical week

Monday	4x4 intervals
Tuesday	Rest or an easy walk
Wednesday	Easy endurance (optional)
Thursday	4x4 intervals
Friday	Rest
Saturday	4x4 intervals (weeks 3–8)
Sunday	Rest or an easy walk

Your heart rate zones

Max heart rate estimated with $211 - 0.64 \times \text{age}$ (Nes et al., HUNT Fitness Study, NTNU). If you know your real max heart rate, use 85–95% of it for intervals and 60–70% for recovery.

Age	Estimated max	Intervals (85–95%)	Recovery and warm-up (60–70%)
20	198 bpm	168–188 bpm	119–139 bpm
25	195 bpm	166–185 bpm	117–137 bpm
30	192 bpm	163–182 bpm	115–134 bpm
35	189 bpm	161–180 bpm	113–132 bpm
40	185 bpm	157–176 bpm	111–130 bpm
45	182 bpm	155–173 bpm	109–127 bpm
50	179 bpm	152–170 bpm	107–125 bpm
55	176 bpm	150–167 bpm	106–123 bpm
60	173 bpm	147–164 bpm	104–121 bpm
65	169 bpm	144–161 bpm	101–118 bpm
70	166 bpm	141–158 bpm	100–116 bpm

The sessions

4x4 intervals

40 min

Exercise	Sets	Reps or time	Intensity
Warm-up Build gradually from easy to moderate.	–	10 min	60–70% HRmax
Work interval Hard but controlled. The last minute should be the hardest.	4	4 min	85–95% HRmax
Active recovery After intervals 1, 2 and 3. Keep moving.	3	3 min	60–70% HRmax
Cool-down Walk or pedal easily until your breathing settles.	–	5 min	Easy

Easy endurance

30–40 min

Exercise	Reps or time	Intensity
Walk, jog, cycle or swim A pace where you can hold a conversation.	30–40 min	60–70% HRmax

Optional. Adds volume without adding fatigue.

How to progress

Weeks

1–2

Learn the pace

Two 4x4 sessions a week. Aim for the lower end of the zone (85–90%) and keep all four intervals at an even effort.

Weeks

3–5

Build

Three 4x4 sessions a week. Let the last two intervals reach 90–95%. When your heart rate stays lower at the same speed or resistance, increase it.

Weeks

6–8

Push

Keep three sessions a week and raise speed, incline or resistance so every interval reaches the zone. In week 8, repeat a week 1 session and compare distance or speed.

Then

Next

Keep it going

Continue with two 4x4 sessions a week, add longer easy sessions, or move on to the Strength + 4x4 Hybrid program.

Training log

Write down what you did each session, for example 60 × 5 for 60 kg for five reps. Seeing the numbers go up is the best motivation there is, and it tells you when to add weight or speed.

4x4 intervals

Week	Date	Activity and speed, incline or level	Peak heart rate	Effort (6–20)
1				
1				
1				
2				
2				
2				
3				
3				
3				
4				
4				
4				
5				
5				
5				
6				
6				
6				
7				
7				
7				
8				
8				
8				

Easy endurance

Week	Date	Activity and speed, incline or level	Peak heart rate	Effort (6–20)
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				

Find the full guide, your personal numbers and more free programs at musclecalc.com/programs/norwegian-4x4-interval-training
This program is general information, not medical advice. If you have a health condition, are pregnant or have been inactive for a long time, talk to a doctor before you start. Stop and seek help if you feel chest pain, dizziness or unusual shortness of breath. © 2026 MuscleCalc.