

Couch to 5K.

Taking up running can seem like a scary prospect, especially if you feel out of shape or unfit. This Couch to 5K will help you gradually work up towards running 5km in just 9 weeks.

What is Couch to 5K?

Couch to 5K is a running plan for absolute beginners. It was developed by a new runner, Josh Clark, who wanted to help his 50-something mum get off the couch and start running, too. The plan involves 3 runs a week, with a day of rest in between, and a different schedule for each of the 9 weeks.

How does Couch to 5K work?

Probably the biggest challenge a new runner faces is not knowing how or where to start. Often when trying to get into exercise, we can overdo it, feel defeated and give up when we're just getting started. Couch to 5K works because it starts with a mix of running and walking to gradually build up your fitness and stamina.

Week 1 involves running for just a minute at a time, creating realistic expectations and making the challenge feel achievable right from the start.

Who is Couch to 5K for?

Couch to 5K is for everyone. Whether you've never run before or you just want to get more active, Couch to 5K is a free and easy way of getting fitter and healthier. If you have any health concerns about beginning an exercise regime like Couch to 5K, make an appointment to see a GP and discuss it with them first.

What are the benefits?

There are plenty of benefits from getting into running. For starters, it's an easy way of improving your physical health. Running requires little equipment, but a good pair of running shoes that suit your foot type may help improve comfort. Running regularly will improve the health of your heart and lungs. It can also help you lose weight, especially if combined with a healthy diet. There's evidence it may help increase bone density in some people, which can help protect against bone diseases like osteoporosis.

There are also mental benefits of running. Taking on the challenge of Couch to 5K can help boost your confidence and self-belief, as you prove to yourself that you can set yourself a target and achieve a goal. Running regularly can also be a great stress reliever and has even been shown to combat depression.

Week 1

For the runs in Week 1, you will begin with a brisk 5-minute warm-up walk, then you will alternate 60 seconds of running, with 90 seconds of walking, for a total of 20 minutes.

Week 2

For the runs in Week 2, you will begin with a brisk 5-minute warm-up walk then you will alternate 90 seconds of running, with 2 minutes of walking, for a total of 20 minutes.

Week 3

For the runs in Week 3, you will begin with brisk 5-minute warm-up walk followed by 2 repetitions of the following; 90 seconds of running, 90 seconds of walking, 3 minutes of running, 3 minutes of walking.

Week 4

For the runs in Week 4, you will begin with a brisk 5-minute warm-up walk then 3 minutes of running, 90 seconds walking, 5 minutes running, 2 ½ minutes walking, 3 minutes running, 90 seconds walking, 5 minutes running.

Week 5

There are three different workouts for this week. They are as follows:

Run 1: brisk 5-minute warm-up walk, then 5 minutes running, 3 minutes walking, 5 minutes running, 3 minutes walking, 5 minutes running.

Run 2: brisk 5-minute warm-up walk, then 8 minutes running, 5 minutes walking, 8 minutes running.

Run 3: brisk 5-minute warm-up walk, then 20 minutes running, with no walking.

Week 6

As with Week 5, there are three different runs for this week.

Run 1: brisk 5-minute warm-up walk, then 5 minutes running, 3 minutes walking, 8 minutes running, 3 minutes walking, 5 minutes running.

Run 2: brisk 5-minute warm-up walk, then 10 minutes running, 3 minutes walking, 10 minutes running

Run 3: brisk 5-minute warm-up walk, then 25 minutes with no walking.

Week 7

For the runs in Week 7, you will begin with a brisk 5-minute warm-up walk then 25 minutes of running.

From now on, the plan gets you used to running for solid blocks of time, without the distraction of walking intervals.

Week 8

For the runs in Week 8, you will begin with a brisk 5-minute warm-up walk then 28 minutes of running.

By now, you should be getting comfortable with the longer runs but you still need to concentrate on completing the 28 minutes without going too fast.

Week 9

For the runs in Week 9, you will begin with a brisk 5-minute warm-up walk then 30 minutes of running.

You've nearly reached the end of your programme and you've made some great progress. This is the week when you can reach your goal. Well done and remember by reading this plan you are already interested in improving your health.