



**Q** I'm 58 and have been road biking for over 30 years. For the last five years I have often exceeded my maximum heart rate, reaching the high 180s when I'm in Zone 5. I feel fine and have had an ECG and full blood tests – all normal. I have always had a fast heart rate, so could it be my genetics? My average HR has been between 140–155. Is there a test that could be done by a specialist or a cardiologist to see if there is an issue?

Johnnygo, on the Cycling UK Forum

Having a higher maximum heart rate (MHR) is not necessarily a problem as the method often used to calculate the

maximum – 220 minus age – is simplistic and unreliable. It does not allow for natural variation due to current fitness levels, genetics, stress levels and the ambient temperature.

Some of the most successful athletes have a MHR around 200. The important thing is that pushing yourself hard on the bike should not cause undue discomfort, whether chest pain or breathing problems. If you feel fine at a higher rate, that is good. Being adequately fed and hydrated, not having excessive caffeine and listening to your body when climbing hills will stop your heart from racing too fast.

Many cyclists like to train with a monitor using the five heart rate zones. The received wisdom is that to train your heart for endurance and a lower heart rate, you need to ride at less intensity (lower zones) for longer – that is, longer, flatter rides with fewer gradients. Riding at higher intensity on steeper gradients will improve your ability to produce short bursts of power. Which you choose depends on whether you want to be a sprinter or an endurance rider.

**Dr Kate Brodie**

## Meet the experts



**Dr Kate Brodie**  
Retired GP  
HEALTH



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TECHNICAL



**Nadia Kerr**  
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**Q** I should be grateful for your thoughts on SPD-compatible footwear for users with bunions. My big toe bunion gets very painful after about 30 miles. I have tried to stretch the fabric of my Shimano shoes but without success. I generally need a wide-fitting shoe.

Peter Woodward

The upper of Lake Cycling's MX242 model has 'separated' panels designed to enhance its flexibility and accommodate foot issues such as



bunions. The shoe is offered in regular and wide widths, has a heat-moldable heel cup and a sole suitable for SPD cleats.

Modifying cycling shoes for comfort was once common among professional racing cyclists, and can be a cost-effective approach. I often trim the insoles supplied with a shoe to remove any trace of pressure on the instep.

Attempting to stretch the non-woven material used in panels over mesh fabric or for the entire shoe upper may not work well as the material used is usually tough. Cutting a slit or hole across a pressure point will allow the edges to move apart and relieve pressure, but be careful: slicing into any underlying woven fabric will weaken it and let it unravel.

**Richard Hallett**

**Get in touch** Email your technical, health or legal questions to [editor@cyclingsuk.org](mailto:editor@cyclingsuk.org) or write to Cycle Q&A, Cycling UK, Parklands, Railton Road, Guildford, GU2 9JX. Please include your membership number. Cycle cannot answer unpublished queries. Note: Cycling UK has an advice line for members' personal injury claims, t: 0330 107 1789.