

Pulse & Target Heart Rate



March to the Beat

Your pulse is the number of times your heart beats each minute – aka your heart rate. Knowing your heart rate – or how to take your pulse – can help you determine your fitness level and evaluate your improvements. For adults, a normal resting heart rate is anywhere from 60-100 beats. If you exceed 100, don't panic, but do consider seeing a doctor.

How to take your pulse:

1. Place the tips of your index and middle fingers on the palm side of the opposite wrist (just below the thumb).
2. Press lightly with your fingers until you feel the blood pulsing – you may need to move your fingers around a bit to feel it.
3. Look at a watch or clock with a second hand.
4. Count the beats for 15 seconds. Multiply that number by 4 to get your heart rate per minute.

It doesn't matter where you are coming from. All that matters is where you are going. – Brian Tracy

Max it out!

Find your maximum heart rate

Your maximum heart rate is the fastest your heart can beat. To determine your predicted maximum heart rate, subtract your age from 220. For example, a 45-year-old's predicted maximum heart rate is 175 bpm.

Some medications and medical conditions can affect your maximum heart rate. If you have or are taking meds for conditions like heart disease, high blood pressure or diabetes, ask your doctor if your maximum and target heart rates should be adjusted accordingly.

Hitting the Target

You get the most out of your exercise and have the fewest risks when you stay within your target heart rate zone. This means your heart rate should be within 50-75% of your maximum heart rate. For example, a 45-year-old's

target heart rate zone is 88-132 bpm (50-75% of 175).

Check your pulse during exercise (or take a brief pause from exercise). This will help you see whether you need to adjust intensity (up or down) to meet your target zone.

When starting a program, you may need to build up to the intensity appropriate for your target zone. You can visit www.americanheart.org for more information.

Five Questions

1. If you had one wish relating to improving your health or fitness, what would it be?
2. What's the best way you can track your progress?
3. To date, what's the biggest fitness success you have experienced?
4. Are others happy with the changes you are making?
5. What emotion best describes how you feel about yourself when you make a conscious decision to not exercise?