Article Link: http://www.webmd.com/heart-disease/heart-failure/watching-rate-monitor

Heart Failure Health Center

**YOUR PULSE AND YOUR TARGET HEART RATE**

**What Is Your Pulse?**

Your pulse is your [heart](http://www.webmd.com/heart/picture-of-the-heart) rate, or the number of times your heart beats in one minute. Heart rates vary from person to person. Your pulse is lower when you are at rest and increases when you [exercise](http://www.webmd.com/fitness-exercise/guide/default.htm) (because more oxygen-rich blood is needed by the body during exercise).

Knowing how to take your pulse can help you evaluate your exercise program. If you are taking heart [medications](http://www.webmd.com/drugs/index-drugs.aspx), recording your pulse on a daily basis and reporting the results to your doctor can help your provider determine if the drugs are working properly.

**How Do I Take My Pulse?**

1. Place the tips of your index (second finger) and third finger on the palm side of your other wrist, below the base of the thumb. Or, place the tips of your index and second finger on your lower neck, on either side of your windpipe.

2. Press lightly with your fingers until you feel the blood pulsing beneath your fingers. You may need to move your fingers around slightly up or down until you feel the pulsing.

3. Look at a watch or clock with a second hand.

4. Count the beats you feel for 10 seconds. Multiply this number by six to get your heart rate (pulse) per minute.

Check your pulse: (beats in 10 seconds) x 6 = (your pulse) OR (beats in 6 seconds) x 10 = your pulse

**What Is a Normal Pulse?**

A normal resting heart rate is generally considered to be 60-100 beats per minute. The exact number will vary among individuals. Children tend to have higher resting heart rates than adults.

**What Is Maximum Heart Rate?**

The maximum heart rate is, on average, the highest your pulse rate can get based on your age. To calculate your predicted maximum heart rate, use this formula:

220 - Your Age = Predicted Maximum Heart Rate

Example: a 40-year-old's predicted maximum heart rate is 180.

Your actual maximum heart rate can be determined by a graded exercise test. Please note that some medications and medical conditions may affect your maximum heart rate. If you are taking drugs or have a medical condition (such as [heart disease](http://www.webmd.com/heart-disease/default.htm), [high blood pressure](http://www.webmd.com/hypertension-high-blood-pressure/default.htm), or [diabetes](http://diabetes.webmd.com/default.htm)), always ask your doctor if your maximum heart rate (and target heart rate) should be adjusted.

**What Is Target Heart Rate?**

You gain the most benefits and lessen the risks when you [exercise](http://www.webmd.com/heart-disease/guide/exercise-healthy-heart) in your ''target heart rate zone.'' Usually this is when your exercise heart rate (pulse) is 60%-85% of your maximum heart rate. In some cases, your doctor may decrease your target heart rate zone to begin with 50%.

Be careful not to exceed your target heart rate. This increases both cardiovascular and orthopedic risk and does not add any extra benefit. Instead, slow down until your heart rate gets into the proper range.

Check with your doctor before starting an exercise program. Your doctor can help you find a program and target heart rate zone that match your needs, goals, and physical condition.

When beginning an exercise program, you may need to gradually build up to a level that is within your target heart rate zone, especially if you have not exercised regularly before. If the exercise feels too hard, slow down. You will reduce your risk of injury and enjoy the exercise more if you don't try to overdo it.

To find out if you are exercising in your target zone (between 60%-85% of your maximum heart rate), stop exercising and check your pulse. If your pulse is below your target zone (see the chart below), increase your rate of exercise. If your pulse is above your target zone, decrease the rate of exercise.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Age** | **Target Heart Rate (HR)**  **Zone (60%-80%)** | **Predicted Maximum Heart Rate** |
| 20 | 120-170 | 200 |
| 25 | 117-166 | 195 |
| 30 | 114-162 | 190 |
| 35 | 111-157 | 185 |
| 40 | 108-153 | 180 |
| 45 | 105-149 | 175 |
| 50 | 102-145 | 170 |
| 55 | 99-140 | 165 |
| 60 | 96-136 | 160 |
| 65 | 93-132 | 155 |
| 70 | 90-128 | 150 |
| **Your Actual Values:** | **Target HR:** | **Max. HR:** |