

# Your Pulse and Your Target Heart Rate

Your **PULSE** is your heart rate, or the number of times your heart beats in one minute. Pulse rates vary from person to person. Your pulse is lower when you are at rest and increases when you exercise (because more oxygen-rich blood is needed by the body when you exercise). Knowing how to take your pulse can help you evaluate your exercise program. If you are taking heart medications, recording your pulse on a daily basis and reporting the results to your health care provider can help your provider determine if the medications are working properly.

## How to take your pulse:

1. Place the tips of your index, second and third fingers on the palm side of your other wrist, below the base of the thumb. Or, place the tips of your index and second fingers 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. Use a watch with a second hand, or look at a clock with a second hand.
4. Count the beats you feel for 10 seconds. Multiply this number by 6 to get your heart rate (pulse) per minute.



The **MAXIMUM HEART RATE** is the highest your pulse rate can get. Calculate your max heart rate with this formula:  
 $220 - \text{Your Age} = \text{Maximum Heart Rate}$

Please note that some medications and medical conditions may affect your maximum heart rate. If you are taking medications or have a medical conditions (such as high blood pressure or diabetes), always ask your health care provider if your maximum heart rate (and target heart rate) should be adjusted.

Age	Target Heart Rate Zone (60-85%)	Average 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

## TARGET HEART RATE

When you exercise, you gain the most aerobic benefits when your exercise heart rate (pulse) is 60 to 80 percent of your maximum heart rate. You may need to gradually build up to this level, especially if you have not exercised regularly before.

Always check with your health care provider first before starting an exercise program. Your health care provider can help you find a program that matches your needs and physical condition.

It is not safe to exercise above 85 percent of your maximum heart rate. If the exercise feels too hard, slow down. You will reduce your risk of injury and enjoy the exercise more than if you try to over-do it! To find out if you are exercising in your target zone (between 60 and 80 percent of your maximum heart rate), stop exercising and check your pulse. If your pulse is below your target zone (see the chart to the left), increase your rate of exercise. If your pulse is above your target zone, decrease your rate of exercise.