

How to Take Your Heart Rate

Taking your pulse during physical activity allows you to measure how hard you are exercising. You should exercise to stay within your target heart range.

You will need a clock or stopwatch that is digital or has a second-hand. You want to **time 15 seconds, or one quarter of a minute.**



- Use your index and middle fingers. Don't use your thumb – it has a pulse of its own.
- Place these two fingers on your wrist, just below the base of the thumb.
- Count the number of beats (pulses) for 15 seconds.
- Take this number and multiply by 4 to find your heart rate in beats per minute. For example, if you count 25 beats, $25 \times 4 = 100$ beats per minute.
 - If you have difficulty with math, try doubling the number twice. 25 doubled is 50. 50 doubled is 100. So your heart rate in beats per minute is 100.



Increasing your heart rate is a key part of exercise, but it is important that your heart rate is not too high or too low. If you are a beginner, you should also be able to breathe comfortably while exercising. This will ensure that you are exercising at a level that is safe and effective for your body.

The chart illustrates target heart rate ranges for exercise based on the maximal heart rate for selected ages. For example, the target exercise heart rate range for a 45-year-old will be 88–149 beats per minute (moderate-to-vigorous activity range).

Here are the steps for using the chart:

- Measure your exercise heart rate in beats per minute (described above).
- Look at the chart.
 - Find your age. If your age falls between the ages listed, round up to the next older age listed.
 - Compare your heart rate to the target exercise range.
- If you are doing **moderate exercise**, your heart rate should be closer to the 50% range.
- If you are doing **vigorous exercise**, your heart rate should be closer to the 85% range.
- Try to stay in the **50–85% range** when exercising by increasing or decreasing exercise intensity.

TARGET HEART RATE RANGES BASED ON AGE

Target Heart Rate Zone
50%–85% of Maximum Heart Rate

Age (years)	50% (BPM)	70% (BPM)	85% (BPM)	Maximum Heart Rate (BPM)
20	100	140	170	200
25	98	137	166	195
30	95	133	162	190
35	93	130	157	185
40	90	126	153	180
45	88	123	149	175
50	85	119	145	170
55	83	116	140	165
60	80	112	136	160
65	78	109	132	155
70	75	105	128	150
75	73	102	123	145
80	70	98	119	140
85	68	95	115	135

Some **medications** may keep your heart rate from going too high. If you are taking medicine for your heart or blood pressure, check with your health care team about how hard you should exercise.