

Your Heart Rate and Aerobic Exercise

Why Monitor Your Heart Rate (pulse)?

During aerobic exercise, your heart beats faster to supply more blood and oxygen to the working muscles in your body. Your heart rate during exercise indicates if you, your muscles, and your heart are working at the proper level. To get the most out of your aerobic exercise program, you should select a target heart rate range and take your pulse both during and after exercise.

Target Heart Rate Ranges

Values in this chart are pulse counts for 10 seconds

AGE	% of Maximum Heart Rate				
	55	60	70	80	90
20	18	20	23	27	30
25	18	20	23	26	29
30	17	19	22	25	29
35	17	19	22	25	28
40	16	18	21	24	27
45	16	18	20	23	26
50	16	17	20	23	26
55	15	17	19	22	26
60	15	16	19	21	23
65	14	16	18	21	23

Effort Level	Exercise at:
Light	<60% of Max. Heart Rate
Moderate	60-75% of Max. Heart Rate
Heavy	75-90% of Max. Heart Rate

Finding Your Pulse

You can measure your pulse at two places. Your radial pulse is found by placing the pads of your first and middle fingers on your wrist (palm facing up) just above the base of the thumb. Or, you can measure your carotid pulse by placing the same two fingers lightly on your neck midway between your Adam's apple and your ear lobe, just below your jawbone.

Counting Your Pulse

1. Stop exercising
2. Find your pulse (using the method above)
3. Count the number of beats you feel for 10 seconds
4. Resume exercise, changing the level of effort as needed
5. Re-check your pulse 2-3 times during exercise

Using Your Target Heart Rate Range

This table shows your target heart rate range numbers for a 10-second count. Find your age or nearest age in the left-hand column. The numbers in the right column show lower to higher effort (intensity) heart rates. Once you have counted your heart rate, look to see if that number is within your target heart rate range. If it is, continue exercising at the same effort. If your heart rate is lower than the lowest number, you may want to exercise a little harder. If it is higher than the highest number, you are exercising too hard and should slow down. Your target heart rate is only a guide to help you get the most out of your exercise program.