

How to Find Your Heart Rate

Your resting heart rate (RHR) and your maximum heart rate (HRmax) are important numbers to know before beginning any exercise program. The best time to take your resting heart rate is when you wake up in the morning. Before getting out of bed count your pulse for 10 seconds. Your pulse is how many times your heart beats in a specific amount of time.

How do you take your pulse?

It's easy! You can take your pulse on your neck or your wrist.

1. **Radial Pulse Check:** Place three fingers (index and middle two fingers) on the underside of your wrist just below the base of your thumb.
2. **Carotid Pulse Check:** Press your index finger and your second finger against your neck, just on either side of your windpipe.
3. Use light pressure against your skin until you can feel the beating of your heart, and begin counting. Watch the second hand of a watch or clock and time how often your heart beats for 10 seconds.
4. Multiply the number of beats by 6 to calculate your pulse measurement. This is your RHR.

$$\text{Beats per 10 seconds} \times 6 = \text{pulse rate}$$

To calculate your maximum heart rate simply subtract your age from 220. If you are 17, the equation would look like this: $220 - 17 = 203$. Your maximum heart rate is 203.

To find a good range for exercising, multiply the maximum heart rate by 0.55. This provides 55 percent of the maximum heart rate. This is the low-end heart rate for an exercise program. Multiply the maximum heart rate by 0.90 to find the high-end heart rate for exercising.

$$\text{Low-end heart rate: } 203 \times 0.55 = 112$$

$$\text{High-end heart rate: } 203 \times 0.90 = 183$$

Using these numbers you can plan a heart-healthy exercise program, targeting a pulse range of 112–183.

Be sure to take your pulse at various intervals during your workout. Stop exercising long enough to count your heartbeats, then continue your workout. Your heart will thank you!