

# We got the beat: Understanding your heart rate



## Everything you do helps your heart keep the beat.

Your heart beats on average around 100,000 times each day. Walking up a flight of stairs will make it go faster, as will being near someone you love. Sometimes, it will beat slower due to medications or medical conditions.

Your heart rate, or pulse, is the number of times your heart beats in 60 seconds. A healthy heart rate (rested, healthy and relaxed state) is between 60 and 100 beats per minute.<sup>1</sup>

## Find your resting heart rate

Knowing your resting heart rate can help you understand your health status. The first step is measuring it. Sit or lie down, relax and lightly put two fingers on the thumb side of your inner wrist or on one side of your neck just below the lower jaw. Find the pulse and count the beats for 30 seconds. Multiply that number by two. The total is your resting heart rate.



**Count it out:** A person who counts 32 beats in 30 seconds has a resting heart rate of 64.

## How hard should your heart work?

When exercising, it's important to know how hard your heart is working. First, calculate your maximum heart rate by subtracting your age from 220. Intense physical activity, like running or a spin class, should put your heart rate within 70% to 85% of your maximum heart rate. During moderate physical activity like walking, your pulse should be within 50% to 70% of your maximum heart rate.<sup>2</sup>



**Do the math:** A 55-year-old would subtract their age from 220. Their maximum heart rate is 165 beats per minute. A quick run should put their pulse between 115 and 140 (70% to 85%) beats per minute. For a less strenuous activity, like a brisk walk, it should be between 82 and 115 (50% to 70%) beats per minute.

## Get moving

Getting your heart beating faster with exercise is a healthy way to make your heart stronger. Just a few minutes of activity will improve your heart's health. Here are a few ways you can tune up your beats:



### Start now, wherever you are

You don't have to spend hours at the gym to give your heart a good workout. Start with just five minutes of any movement you're comfortable with.



### Get your heart rate up

Pick an activity you enjoy. Dancing, pickleball or brisk shopping counts as exercise if you work up a sweat.



### Break activity into smaller chunks

Ten is the magic number. Do any physical activity, like walking on your lunch break, three times a day for 10 minutes.



### Go beyond cardio

Building muscle can help improve your heart health too. Increase your fitness by adding resistance exercises like pushups, squats or by lifting hand weights.

<sup>1</sup><https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/high-blood-pressure/the-facts-about-high-blood-pressure/all-about-heart-rate-pulse>

<sup>2</sup><https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/fitness/fitness-basics/target-heart-rates>

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