

## How to take your pulse and target heart rate while increasing physical activity

Start with any light movement. To progress from light movement or aerobic physical activity to levels that are high enough to be considered exercise or moderate activity, the heart rate (measured through the pulse) should reach close to the target heart rate and within the recommended range for your age.

Caution: Please use discretion if you have any major medical conditions and consult with your physician as needed before stepping up your activity levels. Once you are comfortable with certain movements, the speed or intensity could be gradually increased keeping in mind target rates.

When you are within the target range you know you are at the level of activity considered as moderate physical activity. It's never too late to start exercising. You may have heard about measuring your pulse and aiming for a target heart rate or seen devices that monitor your heart rate during exercise.

You do not need to buy any devices or be an athlete or have medical knowledge to do this. Just enter your age in an online tool (<http://www.active.com/fitness/calculators/hearttrate>), and your recommended range of heart rate will be provided. To keep it simple, ignore the target heart rate and just keep within the range when you start, otherwise choose 55, 70 or 85% as an initial target for "level of exercise" in the menu depending on your perceived fitness level, and strive accordingly for that suggested target rate. You need to take your pulse to see how you are doing.

First practice taking your pulse while sitting down.

- Take your pulse on the inside of your wrist, on the thumb side.
- Use the tips of your first two fingers (not your thumb) to press lightly over the blood vessels on your wrist.
- Count your pulse for 10 seconds and multiply by 6 or count your pulse for 60 seconds (whatever is easier) to find your beats per minute.
- Try it a couple of times so that you feel comfortable counting your pulse.

Then while you keep moving at a comfortable level, measure your pulse. Adjust your level of activity as needed to make sure it keeps within the target range. You can keep progressing till you get comfortable moving at a pace where your pulse is closer to the upper limit.

Once you practice a little bit, it is pretty simple. What you achieve is transitioning from just moving to the higher activity level as in exercise! Remember to keep within the target range for at least 10 minutes at a time to count towards meeting your aerobic exercise recommendations.

It is important to keep stepping up your goals in small steps.

For those who want to get more serious, technical and more precise, you can use this somewhat more complex approach below.

**Calculating target heart rate is a calculation that needs to be done once a year.**

220 minus age of person = Maximal heart rate  
Measure your radial pulse (at the wrist) for a minute while at complete rest (Resting Heart Rate).  
Maximal heart rate minus resting heart rate or pulse = Heart Rate Reserve.  
Target heart rate range is 55% to 85% of Heart Rate Reserve, plus resting heart rate.

Your pulse during exercise should reach a figure closer to your upper target rate calculation. The 85% could be reduced to 70% for medically compromised or beginners & gradually increased over time.

For more information visit:

[http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/HealthyLiving/PhysicalActivity/FitnessBasics/Target-Heart-Rates\\_UCM\\_434341\\_Article.jsp#.V5-sH9KANHw](http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/HealthyLiving/PhysicalActivity/FitnessBasics/Target-Heart-Rates_UCM_434341_Article.jsp#.V5-sH9KANHw)