How to Check Your Pulse

Your heart rate, or pulse, is the number of times your heart beats per minute. Heart rates can vary from person to person. Knowing your average heart rate is an important gauge of your overall heart health.

You can measure your heart rate by checking your pulse. There are two ways you can do this. First, you can check your pulse on your wrist. With one palm facing up, take your index finger and middle finger on your other hand and find your pulse on your wrist below your thumb. Or you can press your index and middle finger on one side of your neck close to your windpipe. Press lightly on your neck, if you press too hard it can cause you to feel light-headed.

Once you find your pulse, count the number of times your heart beats within 10 seconds. You can use a watch with a second hand or set a stopwatch on your phone. Your heart rate is measured per minute. Multiply the number you get in 10 seconds by six to get your heart rate per minute. The total number is your pulse or heart rate. A normal resting heart rate or pulse is between 60 and 100 beats per minute.

If you notice that your heart rate is above or below that range on a regular basis, talk to your healthcare provider. Our pulse goes up and down throughout the day. If you are stressed, anxious or sad your emotions can raise your pulse. If you are obese, you may see a higher resting pulse than normal, but usually it is not more than 100. Certain medications can also affect your pulse. Beta blockers can slow your heart rate.

If your pulse is very low or if you have episodes of fast heart rates that cause you to feel weak, dizzy, or faint, call your doctor. Talk to your healthcare provider about what a healthy heart rate is for you. Your doctor may ask you to regularly monitor your pulse.

Remember to keep a record so you can share it at your next doctor's appointment or through your patient portal. Talk to your healthcare provider about any steps you can take to maintain a healthy heart rate now and in the future.

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