

Understanding Vital Signs

Your heart rate, breathing rate, blood pressure, and temperature are known as your vital signs.

Measuring your vital signs helps your healthcare provider know how well your body is doing.

Your healthcare provider may ask you to track some of your vital signs.

The healthy range for each vital sign depends on your age, gender, your medical history, and how physically fit you are. Learn what is normal for you.

For most adults, a normal resting heart rate is between 60 and 100 beats per minute.

If your heart rate is too high or too low, you may have: chest pain, shortness of breath, lightheadedness, dizziness, or fainting.

Most adults take 12 to 20 breaths per minute at rest.

Rapid or deep breathing can occur with anxiety, panic, and some health problems.

Symptoms of rapid breathing include breathlessness, chest pain, and bloating. You may also have lightheadedness, dizziness, confusion, and numbness or tingling.

Your blood pressure measures how much force is put on your blood vessels when your heart pumps blood through your body.

Blood pressure readings have two numbers.

The top number is your systolic blood pressure, or the maximum pressure, when your heart contracts.

The bottom number is your diastolic blood pressure, or the minimum pressure, when your heart is at rest.

Normal blood pressure is less than 120/80. High blood pressure, or hypertension, occurs when the top number is 130 or greater at rest, or the bottom number is 80 or greater at rest. The higher the readings are, the worse the condition is.

High blood pressure often has no symptoms.

Understanding Vital Signs

Low blood pressure, or hypotension, can be a sudden drop in pressure or pressure that is often below your normal range.

Symptoms of low blood pressure include: blurry vision, confusion, lightheadedness, dizziness or weakness, and fainting or unexplained sleepiness.

The average normal body temperature can vary. The average oral temperature for an adult is around 98 degrees Fahrenheit.

You probably have a fever if your temperature is higher than normal for you. Generally, a temperature over 100 is considered a fever.

The main symptom of fever is being very warm to the touch, even if you are not sweating. You may also have achiness, sweats or chills, and body shakes.

It is dangerous for your body temperature to be below 95 degrees, a condition known as hypothermia.

Early symptoms of hypothermia include: drowsiness, weakness, loss of coordination, cold skin, confusion, and shivering.

Call your healthcare provider if you have a major or unexpected change in your vital signs.

Work with your healthcare provider to know your vital sign ranges and how to take them. It will help prevent problems before they become serious.