# Find Your Target Heart Rate

To be effective, aerobic exercise must get your heart beating faster than normal—but not too fast. This worksheet will help you learn to take your pulse and determine your target heart rate—the rate that's both effective and safe for your age during exercise. You'll need a watch that shows seconds.

First, Learn to Take Your Pulse

Place the first two fingers of one hand gently on the inside of the opposite wrist, nearest the base of your thumb. Using the pads of your fingers—not the tips—move your fingers around until you feel the pulse beating against one of your fingers. Don't try to take your pulse with your thumb; the thumb has a pulse of its own which can confuse you.

Here's another way to take your pulse: Place your two fingers against the side of your neck. Move them around until you find a pulse. You may find the pulse stronger on one side than on the other. Don't press too hard.
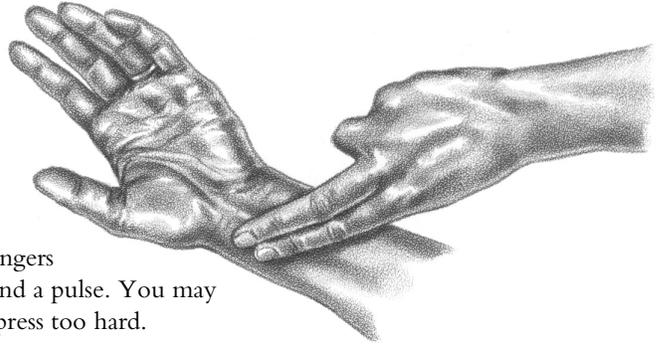
Learn Your Resting Heart Rate

Using your watch as a guide, count your pulse for 10 seconds. Multiply that number by six:

_____ **X 6 =** _____. This number is your resting heart rate, the number of times your heart beats in a minute. Resting heart rates usually vary from 65 to 75 beats per minute.

Practice taking your 10-second pulse until you can do it quickly in the midst of exercise.

Find Your Target Heart Rate

Your target heart rate depends on your age and your physical condition. To find the range into which your target heart rate falls, first subtract your age from 220.

220 – _____ **=** _____
        (your age)

1. To find the lower end of your target heart range, multiply this number by .6.

_____ **x .6 =** _____. (Round off the answer, if necessary.) If you're just beginning an exercise program, or if you're in poor physical condition, aim for this heart rate.

2. To find the upper end of your target heart range, do the same math, but multiply by .85 instead of .6:

_____ **x .85 =** _____. This is the highest rate you should aim for if you're in good physical condition. Anywhere in the range between these two figures is also effective.

Divide each of these numbers by 6 to get the 10-second pulse that you'll take during exercise.

Your target heart range for 10 seconds is _____ **to** _____.

> *"My target heart range?*
> *Hmmm, I'm 35, so..."*
>   **220 – 35 = 185**
>   **185 x .6 = 111**
>   **185 x .85 = 157 (rounded off)**
> *"So, my target heart range is between 111 and 157.*
> *For 10 seconds, that's 19 to 26."*

Take Your Pulse During Exercise

Take your pulse after 5 minutes, 15 minutes, at the end of your aerobic workout and after you cool down. If your heart rate during exercise is below the target rate, increase your rate of exercise: walk faster, swing your arms more vigorously, etc. If your rate is too high, slow down a bit. If your heart rate is still high after you cool down, you may need to slow down your workout.

With practice, you can tell when you're approaching your target heart rate because you begin to breathe harder and you may begin to break out into a sweat, but you're not so winded that you can't carry on a conversation.

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