

# Know Your Pulse



## What is your pulse?

Your pulse is:

- ♥ Your heart beat
- ♥ Your heart rate
- ♥ Your heart rhythm

One of the easiest places to feel your pulse is on your wrist, just below your thumb. You can feel your pulse in other areas of your body, including the crease of your elbow, in your groin or behind your knee.

## Why should you check your pulse?

**Being aware of your pulse is important because it may indicate an arrhythmia (heart rhythm disorder).**

Discovering an abnormal heart rate or rhythm early can ensure you receive accurate diagnosis, and appropriate treatment/therapy from your doctor to help better manage these conditions and their consequences.

## When should you check your pulse?

It is a good idea to try taking your pulse at various points throughout the day (before and after various activities). Your pulse rate will change during the day depending on what activity you are doing. This is normal. To get your baseline pulse and normal rhythm, try taking your resting pulse when you wake in the morning and before going to bed.

## What is a normal pulse?

A normal (resting) rate is between 60 and 100 beats per minute. A normal rhythm has an even gap between beats (ticks like a clock). However, there are normal reasons why your pulse may be slower or faster. This may be due to your age, medications, caffeine, level of fitness, any other illness including heart conditions, stress and anxiety.

## When should you seek further advice?

- ♥ If your pulse seems to be racing some or most of the time and you are feeling unwell.
- ♥ If your pulse seems to be slow some or most of the time and you are feeling unwell.
- ♥ If your pulse feels irregular ('jumping around'), even if you do not feel unwell.

Everyone is different and it is difficult to give precise guidelines. Certainly many people may have pulse rates over 100 beats/min (bpm) and less than 60 bpm. Irregularity is quite difficult to assess since the normal pulse is a bit irregular, varying with the phase of respiration. You should see your doctor if you have a persistent heart rate above 120 bpm or below 40 bpm and/or if the rhythm is irregular, too fast, too slow.



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Published April 2009, Reviewed November 2022

endorsed by  
 Department of Health

# Know Your Pulse in four steps

1

To assess your **resting** pulse rate in your wrist, sit down for **5 minutes** beforehand. Remember that any stimulants taken before the reading will affect the rate (such as caffeine or nicotine). You will need a watch or clock with a second hand.



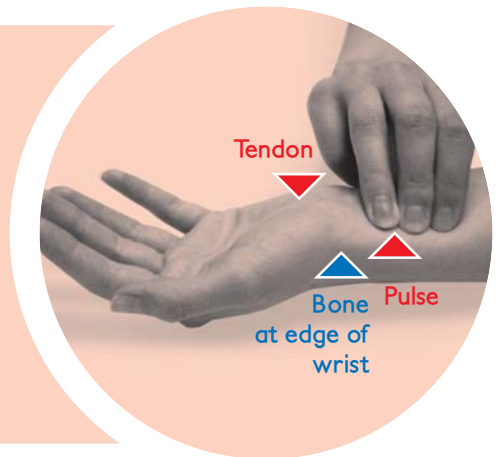
2

Take off your watch and hold your left or right hand out with your palm facing up and your elbow slightly bent.



3

With your other hand, place your index and middle fingers on your wrist, at the base of your thumb. Your fingers should sit between the bone on the edge of your wrist and the stringy tendon attached to your thumb (as shown in the image). You may need to move your fingers around a little to find the pulse. Keep firm pressure on your wrist with your fingers in order to feel your pulse.



4

Count for **30 seconds**, and multiply by 2 to get your heart rate in beats per minute.

If your heart rhythm is irregular, you should count for 1 minute and do not multiply.



## Record your pulse here

Day	Result		Activity (e.g after a run)
	am	pm	
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			