

Figure Out Your Target Heart Rate



Exercise physiologists have come up with a formula called the target heart rate to help you determine how fast your heart should beat in order to maximize health benefits without overexerting yourself. The basic idea is to exercise about 60 to 80 percent of your maximum capability for at least 20 or 30 minutes three or four times a week. This safety zone is called the target heart rate zone. (It may be dangerous to run your heart at its maximum attainable rate for a prolonged period.)

Here's a simple way to determine your target heart rate.

1. Before you start to exercise, take your pulse. Place your first two fingers (not your thumb) over the arteries of the opposite wrist, over the area where your skin creases when you flex your wrist and in line with your thumb.
2. Count the number of beats you feel for 10 seconds and multiply by six. (This number represents your resting heart rate.)
3. Take your pulse after warming up, midway through your workout, immediately after stopping exercise, and again after cooling down.

Using the table, determine whether or not you're within your target heart rate zone, based on your age. If your fastest pulse falls below the range for your age, you might need to exert yourself more while exercising. However, the exercise should never seem more than "somewhat hard." If your pulse exceeds this range, slow down and exercise less intensely.

Note: If your peak pulse rate falls below your target heart rate and your legs feel weak, work on developing endurance—by walking more, perhaps—while you try to increase your heart rate. This can help reduce the risk of musculoskeletal injuries like tendinitis or muscle strain in novice exercisers.

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Age (years)	Target Heart Rate Zone (beats/minute)*	Maximum Attainable Heart Rate (beats/minute)
25	117-156	195
30	114-152	190
35	111-148	185
40	108-144	180
45	105-140	175
50	102-136	170
55	99-132	165
60	96-128	160
65	93-124	155

*These values are averages. Your target heart rate range and maximum attainable heart rate may vary depending on your fitness level.