

# Finding Your Pulse

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## Your pulse

Your pulse is a measure of how fast your heart is beating. It is the number of beats your heart makes in one minute. Your heart beats faster or slower depending on what you are doing.

You can feel your pulse at certain points on your body. The easiest place to feel it is in your **wrist**, using the first two fingers of your other hand.

When you sit, the average heart beats about **80 times per minute**. However, everybody is different, so your pulse could be higher or lower than this.

When you **exercise**, your heart beats more quickly. This is because your muscles are working harder and need more oxygen to keep going. Your lungs also work harder, making you breathe more quickly to get more oxygen.

When you **sleep**, your muscles need less oxygen, so your heart slows down.



You can check your pulse by counting how many times your heart beats in a minute. This is also known as your heart rate.

Your heart rate can vary depending on what you're doing. For example, it will be slower if you're sleeping and faster if you're exercising.

### **Finding your pulse**

You can find your pulse in places where an artery passes close to your skin, such as your wrist or neck.

To find your pulse in your wrist:

- hold out one of your hands, with your palm facing upwards and your elbow slightly bent
- put the first finger (index) and middle finger of your other hand on the inside of your wrist, at the base of your thumb
- press your skin lightly until you can feel your pulse – if you can't feel anything, you may need to press a little harder or move your fingers around

To find your pulse in your neck, press the same two fingers on the side of your neck in the soft hollow area just beside your windpipe.

### **Checking your pulse**

When you find your pulse:

- count the number of beats you feel for one full minute, or
- count the number for 30 seconds and multiply by two

The figure you get is the number of times per minute your heart is beating. It's known as your resting heart rate, as long as you've been resting for at least five minutes before checking your pulse.

### **What's a normal heart rate?**

Most adults have a resting heart rate of 60-100 beats per minute (bpm).

The fitter you are, the lower your resting heart rate is likely to be. For example, athletes may have a resting heart rate of 40-60 bpm or lower.

What is your bpm?

Try counting it at least 3 times to get an average.