

Target Heart Rates

Note: Before starting any exercise program, consult a physician. Check out the PAR-Q (also located under the “Resources” tab) and if you answered ‘yes’ to any of those questions, then it is advised that you first talk to your doctor before starting an exercise program.

American Heart Association Recommendation

Health professionals know the importance of proper pacing during exercise. To receive the benefits of physical activity, it's important not to tire too quickly. Pacing yourself is especially important if you've been inactive.

Target heart rates let you measure your initial fitness level and monitor your progress in a fitness program. This approach requires measuring your pulse periodically as you exercise and staying within 50 to 85 percent of your maximum heart rate. This range is called your **target heart rate**.

What is an alternative to target heart rates?

Some people can't measure their pulse or don't want to take their pulse when exercising. If this is true for you, try using a "conversational pace" to monitor your efforts during moderate activities like walking. **If you can talk and walk at the same time, you aren't working too hard.** If you can sing and maintain your level of effort, you're probably not working hard enough. If you get out of breath quickly, you're probably working too hard — especially if you have to stop and catch your breath.

When should I use the target heart rate?

If you participate in more-vigorous activities like brisk walking and jogging, the "conversational pace" approach may not work. Then try using the target heart rate. It works for many people, and it's a good way for health professionals to monitor your progress.

The table below shows estimated target heart rates for different ages. Look for the age category closest to yours, then read across to find your target heart rate.

Age	Target HR Zone 50–85 %	Average Maximum Heart Rate 100 %
20 years	100–170 beats per minute	200 beats per minute
25 years	98–166 beats per minute	195 beats per minute
30 years	95–162 beats per minute	190 beats per minute
35 years	93–157 beats per minute	185 beats per minute
40 years	90–153 beats per minute	180 beats per minute
45 years	88–149 beats per minute	175 beats per minute
50 years	85–145 beats per minute	170 beats per minute
55 years	83–140 beats per minute	165 beats per minute
60 years	80–136 beats per minute	160 beats per minute
65 years	78–132 beats per minute	155 beats per minute
70 years	75–128 beats per minute	150 beats per minute

Your maximum heart rate is about 220 minus your age. The figures above are averages, so use them as general guidelines.

Note: A few high blood pressure medications lower the maximum heart rate and thus the target zone rate. If you're taking such medicine, call your physician to find out if you need to use a lower target heart rate.

How should I pace myself?

When starting an exercise program, aim at the lowest part of your target zone (50 percent) during the first few weeks. Gradually build up to the higher part of your target zone (75 percent). After six months or more of regular exercise, you may be able to exercise comfortably at up to 85 percent of your maximum heart rate. However, you don't have to exercise that hard to stay in shape.

Source: American Heart Association (www.aha.org)