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 and when should you check your pulse?

Being aware of your pulse is important because it may indicate an abnormal heart rate or rhythm.

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?

Between 60 and 100 beats per minute.

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.

Please remember these are general guidelines and individuals should always discuss their condition with their own doctor.

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