Danbury Hospital

Danbury Hospital Patient Education Sheet

Determining Pulse Rate

What is a pulse rate?

A pulse rate is the number of times your heart beats per minute (also called heart rate). A normal heart beats approximately 60-100 times per minute at rest. Each heart beat forces blood into the arteries.

Your physician may want you to check your pulse rate daily depending on your condition and/or medications that have been prescribed for you.

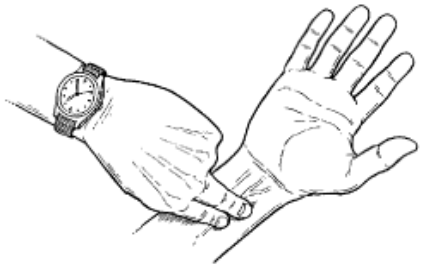
What factors affect the pulse rate?

- Gender
- Emotions
- Exercise
- Age
- Illness
- Medications
- Body temperature

How do you take a radial pulse?

The radial artery is the preferred choice for checking the pulse. To take the radial pulse, follow the steps below:

1. Sit down and relax for five minutes before taking a "resting" pulse.
2. Gently place your index and middle fingers over the radial artery in the groove of the wrist on the thumb side to feel a pulsation.
3. Count the pulsations for a full 60 seconds to determine the heart rate per minute.
4. Do not use your thumb to count your pulse rate. The thumb has a pulse of its own and this may give you a wrong value when counting heart beats.



**Some individuals find it difficult to feel the pulse and accurately measure the pulse rate. In this situation, a pulse monitor can be purchased at most sporting good stores and some drug stores. If you plan to record your pulse rate during exercise, a pulse monitor may be helpful

Notes/Additional Information:

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Source:
American College of Sports Medicine. (2004). *ACSM''s health-related physical fitness assessment manual.* Philadelphia, PA: Lippincott, Williams, & Wilkins.

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