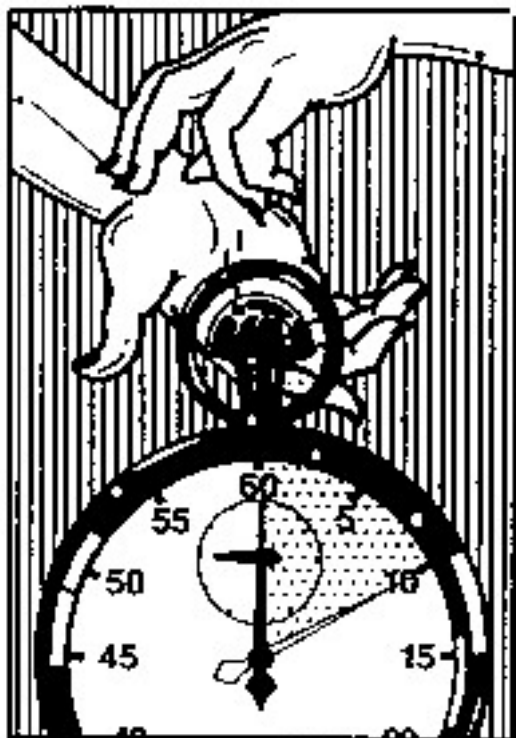


TAKING YOUR PULSE



Once you've found your pulse, look at a clock or watch with a second hand and count the number of beats for a period of 10 seconds. (Begin your count with "0".) Multiply the number of beats by six to find out your "heartbeats per minute."

You've heard over and over, that in order for aerobic exercise to be effective you must exercise within your Target heart Range (THR) for a minimum of 20 to 30 minutes at least three times a week. You've learned how to calculate your THR (220 minus your age multiplied by 60% and by 90%), but how and when do you take your exercising pulse to know if you've reached or are maintaining your THR? Which fingers do you use to find your pulse? Do you take your pulse on your neck or on your wrist? Do you count from "0" or from "1"? How long do you take it for? The following pointers can teach you the proper way to take your pulse and can help answer these common questions.

Finding and Taking Your Pulse

Before you can take your pulse, you have to find it. If you are right-handed, use the pads of your index and middle fingers to find the pulse on your left wrist. With your left hand turned upward, feel for the base of your thumb with your right fingers. Move your fingers to just about an inch below the thumb base and press down lightly until you feel an intermittent "throbbing" sensation in your wrist -- that's your pulse. You can also take your pulse on the side of your neck by lifting your chin slightly and feeling for your pulse in the "soft spot" on your throat (just to the side of the "Adam's apple"). Feel around until you detect a pulsing sensation. Once you've found your pulse, look at a clock or watch with a second hand and count the number of beats for a period of 10 seconds. (Begin your count with "0".) Multiply the number of beats by six to find out your "heartbeats per minute."

When to Take Your Pulse

Before you try to find your exercising pulse, it may first help to practice taking your pulse while doing other activities. Take your pulse while lying down, sitting, standing, and then jogging place. You'll notice that as your level of activity increases so does your number of heartbeats per minute. During exercise, it's best to take your pulse about five minutes into

your exercise session to see if you've reached your THR. If you haven't, slightly increase your level of activity and take your pulse again in five minutes. If you have reached your THR, maintain your present level of activity for at least 20 minutes more before cooling down. Remember, if you reach a point here you are breathless or unable to "talk through" exercise, decrease your level of activity -- you are probably pushing the upper range of your THR. It's also a good idea to take your pulse after cooling down to help determine how long it takes for your heart to return to its resting rate. (The more fit you become, the less time it will take for your heart to "recover" and return to its resting heartbeat.)

A Valuable Skill

As simple as it seems, learning to take your pulse accurately is a valuable skill for everyone, but particularly for the active person. Begin by simply practicing finding your pulse at various times throughout the day. Then, notice how your pulse changes in relation to forms of activity. By learning how to take your pulse properly, you can gauge the intensity of your activities and modify your exercise plan accordingly. You will also be able to monitor your fitness program by tracking your heart's recovery rate after exercise. Take a few minutes and learn how to take your pulse. A little effort will go a long way.