

Pulse checks



What is your pulse?

Your pulse is the number of times your heart beats in a minute. It can also be called your heart rate.

What is a normal pulse?

In most people the heart beats at a steady rate of between **60** and **100** beats per minute. This rate can get faster or slower depending on different things like exercise, anxiety, medication, caffeine, smoking or other heart conditions.

What is an irregular pulse?

An irregular pulse is when the heart doesn't beat in a regular rhythm or rate. This is also called an irregular heartbeat or arrhythmia.

When should I seek further advice?

Talk to your health professional if you notice any of the following.

- **Your pulse seems irregular or is 'jumping around'.**
- **Your pulse is racing, even when you're at rest.**
- **Your pulse seems unusually slow some or most of the time.**

The doctor can do a simple test called an ECG (electrocardiogram) to further check for an irregular pulse.

Why is it important?

Often an irregular pulse can be harmless. However, if you have an irregular pulse, get it checked by a health professional. Sometimes it can be a sign of a heart condition. The most common type of arrhythmia is atrial fibrillation.

If you have atrial fibrillation, you have an increased chance of having a stroke. Your doctor can help you manage your condition and there are medications you can take that can help reduce the risk of a stroke.

Pulse checkpoint

Date.....Age.....

Assisted pulse check

Pulse rate check.....beats per minute Regular Irregular

Self check: take your own pulse



Place 3 fingers over the inside of your wrist, resting the fingers at the base of your thumb. Take time to feel the pulse under your fingers.



Now count each beat for a total time of 30 seconds.



Double the number of beats you counted and that is your heart rate per minute.

Pulse rate.....beats per minute

Did you feel your pulse beat as Regular Irregular

Today your pulse was regular. That's great! Remember to check it regularly!

Today your pulse was irregular. You should visit your Doctor if this is a new symptom. If you have had an irregular pulse in the past it is important to see your Doctor regularly.

Record your pulse

Check your pulse often. It takes three fingers, twice a day for one week to get the pulse habit.

| Day | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|-----|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| am | | | | | | | |
| pm | | | | | | | |

Find more information at heartfoundation.org.nz/pulse

The National Heart Foundation of New Zealand is a registered charity (CC23052) under the Charities Act 2005.