

# Heart Rate: Everything You Need To Know

Heart Rate, or HR, may be the single most important measurement to understand in order to lose weight and get in shape.

We've been recording weight and body fat results for years and, in our opinion, understanding heart rate is the difference between achieving fitness goals and just spending time at the gym. How many people have you seen at your club for months or years but they never get in shape?

## What is Heart Rate?

Your heart is a muscle that pumps blood throughout your body. It is your body's engine. Your **heart rate** is a measurement of how many times it beats in a minute. The more your heart beats, the more it is working.

Like every muscle in your body, you want your heart muscle to be strong and healthy. It is your most important muscle and needs to be thought of in that way.

## Why is Heart Rate so Important?

At rest, an average healthy heart beats 65-75 times per minute. The old adage Use It or Lose It definitely applies.

Your heart is like a car engine. Stopped at a red light, the engine is at rest. When the light turns green, you step on the gas. The engine revs and powers the car forward. Excellent, you're going somewhere! Your heart behaves the same way. If your heart is not strong enough, you "step on the gas" and there's nothing there. That's bad.

Believe it or not, the goal of a cardio workout is not to "lose weight" or "burn calories"... it **should be** to "exercise" your heart. Exercising your heart puts "rev in your engine." That is your new cardio workout goal! Forget burning calories because they will take care of themselves.

Don't confuse Heart Rate with Blood Pressure. Blood pressure is the amount of force, or pressure, being exerted on the walls of your arteries while your blood is circulating. It is very important, too, but different.

## How Much Should I Rev My Engine?

If your heart is an engine, then your heart rate is an RPM or speedometer gauge. Unlike your car's speedometer, the goal of your **heart rate speedometer** is to get that dial up there!

Everyone's dial is a little different, so we'll need to calculate your personal **Target Heart Rate Zone**.

### Step 1: Measure Your Resting Heart Rate

The first step is to take your resting pulse rate.

For best results, measure your Resting Heart Rate just after waking while you are still in bed.

Otherwise, take your pulse rate after sitting calmly for at least five minutes and your mind is at ease.

### Step 2: Maximum Heart Rate

Next, use the chart below to find your Maximum Heart Rate (HRmax) based on your age.

Maximum Heart Rate Chart							
Age	HR <sub>max</sub>						
16	195	31	185	46	174	61	164
17	194	32	184	47	174	62	163
18	193	33	183	48	173	63	163
19	193	34	183	49	172	64	162
20	192	35	182	50	172	65	161
21	191	36	181	51	171	66	161
22	191	37	180	52	170	67	160
23	190	38	180	53	169	68	159
24	189	39	179	54	169	69	159
25	189	40	178	55	168	70	158
26	188	41	178	56	167	71	157
27	187	42	177	57	167	72	156
28	187	43	176	58	166	73	156
29	186	44	176	59	165	74	155
30	185	45	175	60	165	75	154

© BodySpex 2009 Formula Used: (205.8 - (0.685 \* age))

### Step 3: Heart Rate Reserve

Next, we'll calculate your Heart Rate Reserve. Take your Maximum Heart Rate and subtract your Resting Heart Rate.

$$\text{HR}_{\text{max}} - \text{HR}_{\text{rest}} = \text{Heart Rate Reserve}$$

(example for a 30 year-old with a HR<sub>rest</sub> of 72)

$$185 - 72 = 113 \text{ HR}_{\text{reserve}}$$

### Step 4: Your Personal Heart Rate Training Zone

Almost finished... we're ready to calculate your target heart rate zone using the **Karvonen Method**.

**Low-end Training-50% Intensity** (HR<sub>reserve</sub> x .50) + HR<sub>rest</sub> = Low-end Target HR

**High-end Training-85% Intensity** (HR<sub>reserve</sub> x .85) + HR<sub>rest</sub> = High-end Target HR

Example: (using our 30 year-old above)

$$(113 \times .50) + 72 = 128.5 \text{ (lower end)}$$

$$(113 \times .85) + 72 = 168 \text{ (upper end)}$$

**Example Target HR Training Zone: 128 - 168**

When counting "exercise minutes" the minutes that truly count are ones where your heart rate is in the zone, not how long you were at the gym!

And finally, the most beautiful thing about monitoring your HR as you exercise, instead of counting miles or calories burned, is that as your fitness level improves you will be able to exercise longer, harder and faster to stay in your training zone. That's how you really melt off the pounds!