

Exercise: Measuring Intensity



What is exercise intensity?

Exercise intensity is how hard you are exercising. This term is most often used to describe aerobic activity. Any activity that makes your heart beat faster, such as walking or running, is aerobic exercise. Aerobic exercise will help improve your fitness.

The harder you exercise or do a physical activity, the more you improve your fitness. Fitness is good for your heart, lungs, bones, and joints. And it lowers your risk for heart attack, diabetes, high blood pressure, and some cancers.

Why is it important?

If you know how hard you are exercising, you'll know if you've worked hard enough to meet these guidelines suggested by experts:

- Get moderate aerobic activity for at least 2½ hours every week.
- Or, get vigorous aerobic activity for at least 1¼ hours every week.

You can find your exercise intensity by using the talk test, the type of activity, or your target heart rate. Use the method that is best for you.

The talk test

The talk test is an easy way to check your exercise intensity:

- You're getting moderate aerobic activity if you can talk but can't sing while doing an activity.
- You're getting vigorous aerobic activity if you can only say a few words while doing your activity.
- You are exercising too hard if you can't talk while doing your activity.
- You may not be exercising hard enough if you can sing while doing your activity.

Type of activity

The type of activity you do can also tell you how hard you are exercising.

Moderate aerobic activity

- Walk briskly.
- Cycle briskly (10 to 12 miles an hour).
- Shoot baskets.
- Play golf without using a cart.
- Swim leisurely.

Vigorous aerobic activity

- Jog or run.
- Cycle fast (at least 12 miles an hour).
- Hike.
- Play soccer.
- Cross-country ski.
- Swim moderately to hard.

Target heart rate

Another way to know how hard you are exercising is to use your target heart rate. This is a percentage of your maximum heart rate. One way to find your maximum heart rate is to subtract your age from 220. Once you have your

maximum heart rate, you can find your target heart rate for moderate and vigorous aerobic activity.

- Moderate aerobic activity is 60% to 70% of your maximum heart rate.
- Vigorous aerobic activity is 70% to 80% of your maximum heart rate.

See the table below for an example.

Find beats per minute

- After exercising for about 10 minutes, stop.
- Place 2 fingers on the inside of your wrist, below your thumb. Don't use your thumb.
- Count the beats for 15 seconds. Multiply the number of beats by 4 to get beats per minute.
- Use your beats per minute to adjust how hard you are exercising.

Finding your target heart rate		
	Example	You try it
Age	50	I'm _____ years old.
Maximum heart rate	$220 - 50 = 170$	220 minus my age equals _____. This is my maximum heart rate.
Moderate activity	<p>The 60% level is 170×0.60. This is 102 beats per minute (bpm).</p> <p>The 70% level is 170×0.70. This is 119 bpm.</p> <p>The target heart rate is 102 to 119 bpm.</p>	<p>My maximum heart rate of _____ $\times 0.60 =$ ____ bpm.</p> <p>My maximum heart rate of _____ $\times 0.70 =$ ____ bpm.</p> <p>My moderate level target heart rate is ____ to ____ bpm.</p>
Vigorous activity	<p>The 70% level is 170×0.70. This is 119 bpm.</p> <p>The 80% level is 170×0.80. This is 136 bpm.</p> <p>The target heart rate is 119 to 136 bpm.</p>	<p>My maximum heart rate of _____ $\times 0.70 =$ ____ bpm.</p> <p>My maximum heart rate of _____ $\times 0.80 =$ ____ bpm.</p> <p>My vigorous level target heart rate is ____ to ____ bpm.</p>