

## Is Your Resting Heart Rate Normal?

Many things affect your heart rate, including whether you are relaxed or stressed, lying down or exercising, and even standing or sitting. Your fitness level also affects your resting heart rate.



The best time to find out your resting heart rate is in the morning, after a good night's sleep and before you get

out of bed. While lying still, count the number of times your heart beats in a minute. Most people have a resting rate between 60 and 80 beats per minutes. Sedentary individuals can have heart rates as high as 80-90 beats per minute. Well-trained athletes may range between 40 and 60 beats per minute.

A pulse that is faster than normal may signal a low cardiovascular fitness level. It can also predict heart risk. A recent study of nearly 130,000 postmenopausal women found that a resting heart rate of 76 beats per minute or higher increased the risk of heart attack. There is also link

On average, a human heart beats 100,000 times in a day, about 35 million times a year, and more than 2.5 billion times over a lifetime.



between resting pulse and heart attack risk in men.

You can lower your resting pulse by exercising regularly (e.g., walk, jog, bike, or do active sports). Your heart will beat faster during and immediately following exercise. But regular, moderate exercise will gradually lower your resting heart rate as much as 10-20 beats per minute. This is a sign your heart is growing stronger and your cardiovascular fitness level is improving. Exercise will also help you better manage the negative effects of stress on your body. Aim for 30-60 minutes of moderate exercise each day.

If your resting heart rate is 100 or higher, be sure to talk with your doctor about it. If you are not exercising regularly and you have a very low resting pulse, ask your doctor to check it.

*National Institutes of Health and British Medical Journal Feb. 3, 2009.*

**Y**ou can use your resting pulse as a gauge for your fitness level. If you are currently sedentary or have a low level of exercise, you can see quite a bit of improvement – as much as a 20 beats lower over time.

Determine your resting heart rate now. Begin a regular exercise program – at least 30 minutes of moderate exercise each day. One month into the program, check your resting pulse. Take your resting pulse again after 3 months, 6 months, and 1 year. Your heart rate should decrease as your cardiovascular fitness improves.

### World Physical Activity Day is April 6.

The theme centers on “active neighborhoods building health.” You are encouraged to commit to simple lifestyle changes that incorporate physical activity, such as riding your bike to work and walking whenever and wherever possible. Register your community event at: [www.agitamundo.org](http://www.agitamundo.org)

Read about the heart, from NOVA: [www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/heart](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/heart)

## Want Healthy Arteries? Get More Sleep

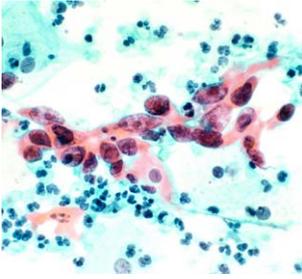
University of Chicago researchers have discovered a link between sleep and artery health, after studying nearly 500 people for 5 years. People who slept only 5-7 hours nightly were almost twice as likely as those who slept longer to develop early blood-vessel damage that may lead to heart problems.

People who regularly slept 5 hours or

less daily had a 4-fold increase in the risk of clogged arteries when compared to people who slept 8 hours or more daily. No one knows why this is true – yet – but researchers are looking into a stress hormone called “cortisol,” which is reduced by inadequate sleep.



*Journal of the American Medical Association. Dec. 24, 2008.*



## What You Need to Know to Prevent Cancer

Cancer is the term used to describe more than 100 diseases, all of them relating to your body's most basic biological structural – the cell. Normally, there's a delicate balance between normal cell replication and uncontrolled

growth that occurs throughout our lifetime. However, if the balance is disrupted, cancer might occur. Most genes are damaged during a person's lifetime due to a variety of factors including:

- **Carcinogens** that damage genes, such as those found in cigarette smoke or charcoal-roasted meats.
- **Excess radiation** that can occur from too much sun. Sun exposure that is intense enough to cause a burn can also damage the genes in skin and can result in skin cancer.
- **Viruses**, such as the HPV virus which is spread by unsafe sexual practices. This virus damages genes and causes most cases of cervical cancer.

- **High levels of hormones**, such as estrogen and insulin, which over time increase the risk for cancer. (Obese people and people with type 2 diabetes have high insulin levels.)
- **Occupational exposure** to chemicals, including asbestos, benzene, and certain dyes, can damage genes and cause cancer.
- **Lifestyle factors** that affect the health and immune system, increasing the risk for cancer. These factors include having an inactive lifestyle, being obese, eating very few fruits and vegetables, and eating a lot of saturated fats and red meats.

The American Cancer Society points out that most cancers can be prevented by adopting a healthy lifestyle, taking precautions against exposure to carcinogens and excess radiation from the sun, and getting regular preventive exams that can identify cancer early, while it is still treatable.

*American Cancer Society. 2009.*

Learn more about cancer prevention: [www.wellsource.info/wn/preventcancer.pdf](http://www.wellsource.info/wn/preventcancer.pdf)

## Do You Know About COPD?

The fourth-leading cause of death in the United States is COPD (Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease) – a serious lung disease affecting an estimated 24 million Americans. More than 12 million people are currently diagnosed with COPD, and another 12 million may have COPD but remain undiagnosed despite recognizable symptoms.

COPD typically affects people over age 45, especially those who smoke or have smoked, and those with risk factors associated with genetics or environmental exposures. Symptoms include chronic cough, sometimes called “smoker’s cough,” shortness of breath, wheezing, not being able to take a deep breath, and excess mucus produced by the lungs.

According to a recent survey, few Americans have a thorough understanding of



COPD can be diagnosed with a simple breathing test called spirometry.

the disease. For example, most survey respondents (66%) did not recognize smoking as a risk factor. This was especially true among the current smokers surveyed. Just 22% recognized that their smoking puts them at greater risk

for COPD. Exposure to secondhand smoke also increases COPD risk.

COPD can be diagnosed with a simple breathing test called spirometry.

Spirometry is not invasive and can be conducted in the

doctor's office. It involves breathing out as hard and fast as possible into a tube connected to a machine that measures lung function. If you have been diagnosed with COPD, you'll find many treatments are available to reduce symptoms, improve breathing, and help you get back to doing activities you used to do.

*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 2009.*

For more information on COPD, visit: [www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/lung/copd](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/lung/copd) and [www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/dci/Diseases/Copd/Copd\\_WhatIs.html](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/dci/Diseases/Copd/Copd_WhatIs.html)

### ASK THE Wellness DOCTOR

**Q:** Can a regular exercise program reduce the risk of getting cancer?

**A:** Go to [wellsource.info/wn/ask-cancer.pdf](http://wellsource.info/wn/ask-cancer.pdf) to read the answer from Don Hall, DrPH, CHES.

To ask your question, email: [well@wellsource.com](mailto:well@wellsource.com), subject line: Ask the Wellness Doctor. Emails with any other subject line will be directed to the spam folder.