

Heart Rate Ranges & Exercise

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You will get different benefits when exercising at different heart rate intensities. For most people, exercising at 50 – 80% of your maximal heart rate is recommended. For unfit individuals, an intensity of 40-50% of maximal heart rate is recommended. Target heart rate is found by using the following steps (these calculations should be done twice, once for the higher percentage and once for the lower percentage to give a target heart rate range):

- $220 - \text{age} = \text{estimated max heart rate (HR)}$
- $\text{Estimated max HR} - \text{resting HR} = \text{Heart rate reserve (HRR)}$
- $\text{HRR} \times \text{percentage of intensity} = \text{percentage of HRR}$
- $\text{Percent of HRR} + \text{resting HR} = \text{target HR}$

For example, I am 26 years old so $220 - 26 = 194$. That is my “estimated” maximum heart rate (to determine your real max heart rate, you need to do a VO_2 max test) My resting heart rate is 60. $194 - 60 = 134$ (my heart rate reserve). To exercise at 50%, I'd take $134 \times .5$ (67) plus 60... $67 + 60 = 127$. That is the lowest I want my heart rate to be when exercising. To find 80%, I'd do the same calculation: $134 \times .8 = 107$. $107 + 60 = 167$. I would not want to exercise above that heart rate. So my heart rate range for exercise is 127 – 167. Your heart rate can be monitored on most machines by hanging on to the sensors. You can also purchase a heart rate monitor at sporting good stores, or take your pulse for 30 seconds and multiply by 2 during the middle of a workout.

Exercising at higher than 80% of your maximum heart rate will cause you to fatigue rather quickly (less than 20 minutes). However, for athletes and people who are using high intensity training, there are benefits of exercising at a high heart rate. For the general population who wants to lose weight or keep their heart and lungs healthy, shoot for 20 to 60 minutes of exercise between 50 – 80% of your maximal heart rate.