HAPPY HEARTBEATS

LIFE SKILL
using leisure time effectively

Why take an interest in your physical fitness?
Regular exercise is important to health and well-being, but always check with your doctor before beginning an exercise program. One of the best things you can do for your heart is to exercise regularly. If you increase your heart rate 20 to 30 minutes three times a week, you will strengthen and condition your heart muscle. That's important because a strong heart will work better and keep you healthier. When you feel healthy and energetic, everything you do will seem like more fun! This activity will show you how fast your heart should beat when you exercise.

What do we need?
paper and pencil; stopwatch; calculator (optional)

How long will it take?
5 to 10 minutes multiplied by the number of family members

What do we do?
• Find out your resting heart rate (RHR).
  — Choose a time when your body is relaxed; for example, before you get out of bed in the morning.
  — Locate your carotid artery (the one in your neck) or find another pulse point like your wrist.
  — When you feel a pulse, count the number of times your pulse beats in 15 seconds. Write it down.
  — Multiply the number of heartbeats by 4. This is your RHR.

  Find out how fast your heart should beat when you exercise:
  Subtract your age from 220.

  Subtotal ______

  Subtract your RHR from this figure.

  Subtotal ______
Now multiply this figure by .75 and round off the decimal points.

Subtotal ______
Now add your RHR.

Grand total ______
This figure is called your training heart rate (THR). Try to get your heart beating this fast when you exercise. When you do, you'll strengthen your heart so it won't have to work as hard when you are not exercising.

Option. Try raising your heart rate to your THR.

- Jog in place, jump rope, swim, walk briskly, ride a bicycle, or do something strenuous for several minutes.
- Stop and take your pulse again. Did you get it up to your THR?
- Plan to exercise at your THR regularly.
- Choose an activity you can do for 20 to 30 minutes.
- Do it at least three times a week.

After about a month of regular exercise, measure your heart rate. If it's lower, it means your heart is getting stronger. Now figure out your new training heart rate so you can keep up the good work.

Notes:

- If you have trouble finding your pulse or need help with the math calculations, ask another family member for help.
- People have different heart rates, so don't be alarmed if yours seems higher or lower than someone else's.

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What happened?

- What activity did you choose to increase your heart rate?
- Did you enjoy this activity? If you didn’t enjoy it, was it difficult to make yourself do it?

What did you learn?

- What sorts of exercise would you be likely to do regularly?

Why was this activity important?

- Why is it important to exercise?
- How would making regular exercise a part of your life affect your physical well-being? Your emotional well-being?

What’s next?

- How will you make regular physical exercise a part of your life?
- How will you help other family members develop an exercise plan? Can you think of special ways to celebrate when family members meet their fitness goals?