

# Taking the Pulse: A Comparison Chart

Learn how to calculate your own pulse, a child's pulse, and an infant's pulse with this comparison chart. The below instructions are meant for an educational setting. In an emergency setting, feeling for the existence of a pulse, rather than calculating a pulse, is of primary concern.

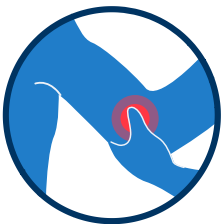
## How to Find the Brachial Pulse

While it may not be the go-to pulse calculation location on adults or children, it is much easier to find on an infant. Knowing how to find the brachial pulse adds to your knowledge and understanding of how the human body works.



### ADULTS

To find the brachial pulse in an adult, place two or three fingers on the inner side of the person's upper arm. Feel between the biceps and triceps in an upward motion toward your humerus.



Hold your fingers still to feel for a beat, adjusting your fingers until you feel a thump.

#### **Pro Tip:**

When taking any pulse, do not use your thumb, as it has its own pulse and can confuse your reading. mechanical heartbeat occurs.

In all of these cases, immediate medical treatment is needed to restore your heart's normal rhythm.



### CHILDREN

To find the brachial pulse in a child, place your index and middle fingers on the inner side of the child's upper arm, next to the bicep.



Hold your fingers still to feel for a beat, adjusting your fingers until you feel a thump.

#### **Pro Tip:**

Children can be very active, so if you are attempting to discover a child's average heart rate, have them rest for several minutes first.



### INFANTS

To find the brachial pulse in infants, lay the infant down with their hand by their ear, bending the arm if you need to.



Feel for the pulse on the inner arm, between the shoulder and the elbow, gently pressing your middle and index fingers together until you feel a beat.

#### **Pro Tip:**

A healthy infant's heart rate should be very fast and can be difficult to count.

## How to Find the Radial Pulse

The go-to area when taking an adult or child's pulse, the radial artery is located in both wrists. Remember to use gentle pressure when calculating a pulse, as you don't want to stifle or interrupt its rhythm.



### ADULTS

To find the radial pulse in an adult, place your index and middle fingers between the bone and the tendon over the radial artery, located on the thumb side of the wrist.



You can use one of the following three methods to calculate your radial pulse, from least to most accurate:

- 1 15 seconds**  
Count for 15 seconds and multiply by four to get a pulse rate.
- 2 30 seconds**  
Count for 30 seconds and multiply by two to get a pulse rate.
- 3 60 seconds**  
Count for 60 seconds and record the pulse rate.



### CHILDREN

To find the radial pulse in a child, place your index and middle fingers between the bone and the tendon over the radial artery, located on the thumb side of the wrist.



You can use one of the following three methods to calculate a child's radial pulse, from least to most accurate:

- 1 15 seconds**  
Count for 15 seconds and multiply by four to get a pulse rate.
- 2 30 seconds**  
Count for 30 seconds and multiply by two to get a pulse rate. rate.
- 3 60 seconds**  
Count for 60 seconds and record the pulse rate.

**Pro Tip:**

If you can't locate the child's radial pulse, check the carotid pulse in the side of the neck, following the above instructions.



### INFANTS

Calculating an infant's pulse through the radial artery is more difficult than the brachial artery (seen above) so it might take extra practice.



You can use one of the following three methods to calculate a child's radial pulse, from least to most accurate:

- 1 15 seconds**  
Count for 15 seconds and multiply by four to get a pulse rate.
- 2 30 seconds**  
Count for 30 seconds and multiply by two to get a pulse rate.
- 3 60 seconds**  
Count for 60 seconds and record the pulse rate.

#### Did you know? Brachial Blood Pressure

The brachial artery is also used to calculate blood pressure. Medical professionals use a blood pressure cuff to listen for systolic and diastolic pressure, which makes up the number you see on your medical chart.

"Systolic" is the whooshing sound heard through the stethoscope when the cuff deflates. "Diastolic" is when that noise stops.

## Taking the Pulse FAQs

**Q: How many pulse points does the human body have?**

A: The human body has nine pulse points! From top to bottom, they are:

1. Carotid: below the jaw angle, beside the trachea
2. Temporal: along the top of the cheekbone
3. Brachial: on the inner side of the bicep muscle
4. Radial: on the bottom of the wrist, near the base of the thumb
5. Apical: at the apex of the heart
6. Femoral: below the inguinal ligament, or the groin crease
7. Popliteal: on the back of the knee
8. Posterior Tibial: on the inside of the ankle
9. Dorsalis Pedis: at the top of the foot

**Q: What's the best way to calculate a consistent pulse?**

A: If you're trying to calculate your own pulse, and want a consistent number, take your pulse at the same time, in the same place, every day. Sit quietly for several minutes before calculating, and count for a full 60 seconds to get your number. Track that number for a week, and you'll see a consistent number emerge.

**Q: What factors can influence heart rate?**

A: If you're trying to calculate your own pulse, and want a consistent number, take your pulse at the same time, in the same place, every day. Sit quietly for several minutes before calculating, and count for a full 60 seconds to get your number. Track that number for a week, and you'll see a consistent number emerge.

**Q: What's a normal, healthy heart rate?**

A: "Normal" encompasses a wide range of numbers! However, an unusually high or low heart rate may indicate issues. If an adult or child over 12's resting heart rate is **consistently** over 100 beats per minute or below 60 beats per minute (and you're not a trained athlete), you may want to consult your doctor.

Note that these same rules do not apply to infants. An infant with a heart rate below 100 beats per minute is a medical emergency. At 60 BPM, which can be healthy for an adult, a rescuer would perform CPR on an infant.