Toolbox Talks | Target Heart Rates

How do you get your heart rate in the target zone?

When you work out, are you doing too much or not enough? There's a simple way to know: Your target heart rate helps you hit the bullseye so you can get the maximum benefit from every step, swing and squat.

First Things First: Resting Heart Rate

Your **resting heart rate** is the number of times your heart beats per minute when you're at rest. A good time to check it is in the morning after you've had a good night's sleep, before you get out of bed or grab that first cup of java!

- For most of us, normal is between 60 and 100 beats per minute (bpm).
- The rate can be affected by factors like stress, anxiety, hormones, medication, and how physically active you are.
- An athlete or more active person may have a resting heart rate as low as 40 beats per minute!

When it comes to a resting heart rate, lower is better. It usually means your heart muscle is in better condition and doesn't have to work as hard to maintain a steady beat. Studies have found that a higher resting heart rate is linked with lower physical fitness and higher blood pressure and body weight.

So what's in a number?

If your heart rate is too high, you're straining. If it's too low, and the intensity feels "light" to "moderate," you may want to push yourself to exercise a little harder, especially if you're trying to lose weight. If you're just starting out, aim for the lower range of your target zone (50 percent) and gradually build up. In time, you'll be able to exercise comfortably at up to 85 percent of your maximum heart rate.

Important Note: Some drugs and medications affect heart rate. This means that you may have a lower maximum heart rate and target zone. If you have a heart condition or take medication, ask your healthcare provider what your heart rate should be.

Frequently Asked Questions:

Should I be checking my heart rate every time I work out?
It is a good habit to get into and it will tell you if you are achieving your workout goals.

Discussion Questions:

- Do you check your heart rate frequently?
- Have you tried fitness trackers/smart watches to do this?