

## Am I going fast enough?

Canada's Physical Activity Guide to Healthy Active Living recommends accumulating at least 60 minutes of light physical activity every day to stay healthy or improve health. If you increase the intensity of the effort, you can reduce the minimum time to 30-60 minutes. A more vigorous effort will require only 20-30 minutes. But, what is **light**, what is **moderate** and what is **vigorous**? The actual pace will vary for each individual, depending on their fitness level, age and health status. What may seem like a slow walk to one person may feel like a sprint for another!

There are at least three different methods to monitor intensity, and all three take into account the individual's fitness level.

### 1. The Talk Test

This is the simplest of all, keeping in mind these are just "rules of thumb", to make your life simpler. One question to ask yourself is: "Can I talk or sing while doing the activity?"

Singing & Talking Status	Intensity
I can sing!	Light intensity
I can talk!	Moderate intensity
I can't carry on a conversation!	Vigorous intensity Very vigorous intensity

### 2. The Borg Scale of Perceived Exertion (*recently revised*)

"Listening to your body" is another fairly straightforward way to gauge intensity. This approach has the advantage of providing you with more information than just how your heart is responding to activity. How hard is this for you?

Rating	Description
0	Nothing
1	Very light
2	Light (weak)
3	Moderate
4	Somewhat hard
5	Heavy (strong)
6	
7	Very heavy
8	
9	
10	Very, very heavy (almost maximum)

A light intensity would therefore be approximately 1-2, a moderate intensity 3-4, and a vigorous intensity would correspond to 5-6.



### 3. Target Heart Rate

The Target Heart Rate is another way of measuring intensity, but it may not always be convenient to use. There are also individual variations depending on heart size and other physiological differences between individuals.

To assess your heart rate, you need to stop and find your pulse and begin timing within five seconds of stopping. You can take your pulse on your carotid artery (between the windpipe and the muscle of the neck) or on your wrist (on the thumb side of the wrist, just below the palm and between the tendons).

The target heart ranges are based on a percentage of your maximum heart rate (roughly equal to 220 minus your age). The following formula can be used:

$$(220 - \text{age}) \times \text{the \% representing the desired intensity}$$

To save having to calculate, the following chart indicates intensity based on a 10-second count. The breakdowns for intensity are based on the Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology.

