

Monitoring Technique 2: The Perceived Exertion Scale

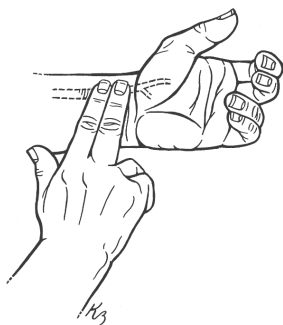
How to use it: The perceived exertion scale allows you to be more specific than the talk test in determining the intensity of your exercise. With perceived exertion, people score intensity based on how they feel.

To use this scale, look at the descriptions and pick one that best describes your level of exertion, and then look at the numeric rating that matches. For example, if you stated that the effort you were exerting was at the “hard” level, the corresponding number to this would be 9. If you’re brand-new to walking and exercise or if you have significant limitations or are older, you should begin walking at a “very light” level (2) or at most a “fairly light” level (3) of exertion for you. That would be a slow walk or stroll. Over time, gradually increase your exertion level to walk at a “moderate/somewhat hard” level (4 to 7). Even if you are very fit, do not exercise at a level you would describe as “hard,” “very hard,” or “very, very hard.” At those levels you risk injuring yourself.

Ideally, you should take a copy of this scale with you and check your perceived level of exertion when you’re walking, but you can also measure it just before you begin your cool down.

Monitoring Technique 3: Heart Rate Scale

How to use it: For most people, monitoring your intensity by taking your pulse and using the heart rate scale is the most accurate way to measure your cardiac intensity. By finding out what your target heart rate is you ensure that you’re working at a



safe and effective level for you. Moderate cardiac intensity – the kind of walking that is recommended for health and fitness – should raise your heart rate into a range between 60% and 75 % of your maximum heart rate. This range is called your target heart rate and is the recommended level for walking for most people with arthritis.

Perceived Exertion Scale

Verbal description of your exertion

Numeric rating of your exertion

Nothing at all (such as lying down)	0
Very, very light (practically nothing)	1
Very light	2
Fairly light	3
Moderate (still light but starting to work a little more)	4
Moderate (still comfortable but harder)	5
Moderate (getting to be somewhat hard)	6
Somewhat hard	7
Hard	8
Very hard	9
Very, very hard (couldn't do for more than a few seconds)	10

Be aware that maximum heart rate declines with age, so your safe target heart rate gets lower as you get older. You can use the target heart rate scale and the steps outlined here to find your target heart rate.

How to take your pulse: You should measure your heart rate a few minutes into your exercise program to determine how much you're exerting yourself. To use the heart rate scale to monitor walking, you need to know how to take your pulse for 10 seconds. You'll need a clock or watch with a second hand.

Here are the steps for a 10-second heart rate count:

- Take your pulse by placing the pads of your index and middle fingers on your wrist below the base of your thumb. Do not use your thumb to take your pulse because it has its own pulse and will get in the way of counting of your actual pulse. You should be able to feel your blood pumping and the “thump” of your heart beating.
- Get your clock or watch ready, and for 10 seconds count how many beats you feel. Begin your count with zero for the first beat you feel.
- Multiply your number of heartbeats by 6 to find out how many times your heart is beating in one minute. Example: if you counted 13 heartbeats, multiply 13 by 6, which equals 78. So your heart rate would be 78.

- Your number should fall within the 60% to 75% range of numbers for your age level on the Target Heart Rate Scale. If your number is too high, you’re exercising too intensely. Slow down. If your number is too low, and you feel OK, you can work harder.

Target Heart Rate Scale					
Age	Max Heart Rate	One Minute Count		10-Second Count	
		60% of max	75% of max	60% of max	75% of max
20–24	200	120	150	20	25
25–29	195	117	146	19	24
30–34	190	114	142	19	24
35–39	185	111	139	18	23
40–44	180	108	135	18	22
45–49	175	105	131	17	22
50–54	170	102	127	17	21
55–59	165	99	124	16	21
60–64	160	96	120	16	20
65–69	155	93	116	15	19
70–74	150	90	112	15	19
75+	145	87	108	14	18

Some people have trouble increasing their heart rate, even to the 60% level, particularly at first. Don't worry about that. As you become experienced and stronger, your heart rate will rise because you're exercising more vigorously.

Special considerations: If you're pregnant or taking medicines that affect your heart rate, the target heart rate scale will not be accurate. Instead, monitor your exercise intensity by using the talk test or the rate of perceived exertion scale. Here are some types of medicines that may affect the accuracy of the scale:

- Heart medicines
- High blood pressure medicines
- Medicines for depression, anxiety, or other mood disorders
- Cold medicines
- Diet medicines
- Medicines to help your breathing (for asthma, COPD, etc.)

Measuring Your Fitness Level

The main reason for measuring your fitness level is that it gives you a good gauge of your progress, especially if you do this at the beginning and ending points of your walking contract, as outlined in Chapter 3. Measuring your fitness level is easy. There are three good methods.