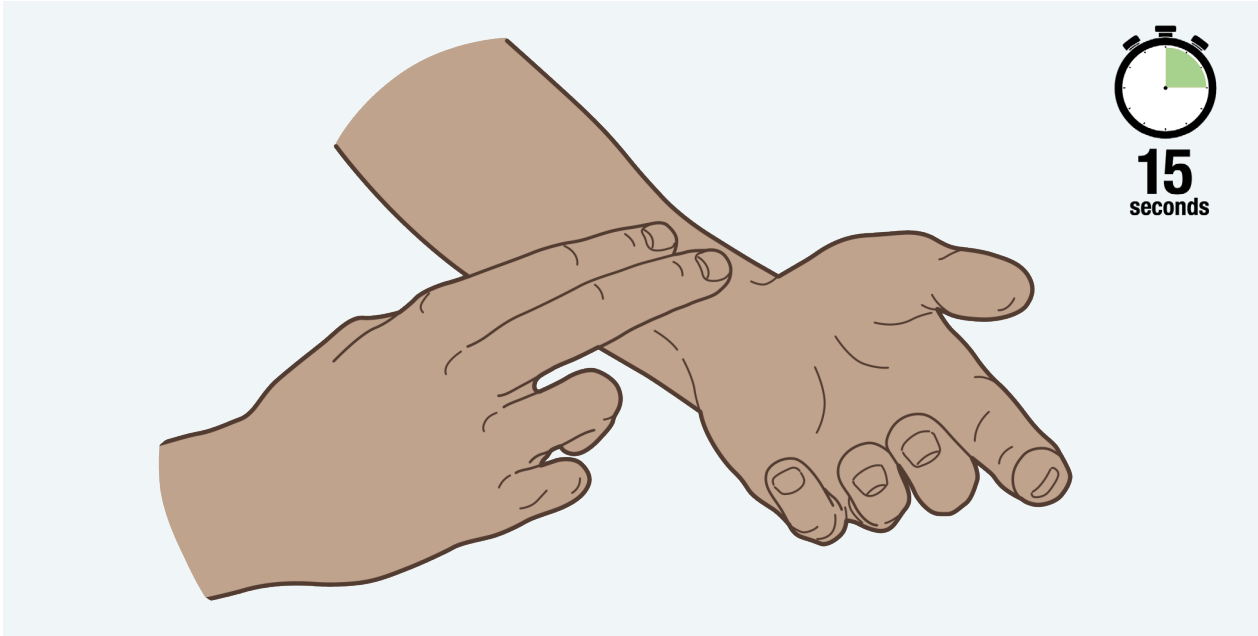


Activity 35: Feeling pulse

Video demonstration



Your heart is a pump which pumps blood around your body through your arteries. Where the arteries are close to your skin you can feel the blood moving; this movement of your blood is called your pulse. You can feel your pulse in several places by gently feeling an artery with your fingertips. You can count your pulse to work out how fast your heart is beating; this is called your heart rate. The easiest place to feel your pulse is on your wrist.



1. Sit down and rest your hand on your leg with your thumb up in the air and your palm facing up.
2. With the first two fingers of your other hand, stroke from the top of your thumb down the side until your fingers reach your wrist.
3. Move your fingers slowly onto the inside of your wrist, and gently feel for your pulse.
4. When you have found your pulse, you can count how many beats in 15 seconds.
5. How does your pulse feel? Is it fast or slow? Is it hard or soft?

(Students who are able can multiply their score by four, which will give them their heart rate per minute.)

Follow-on activity:

Jump up and down or run on the spot for one minute. Now find your pulse again and count the beats for 15 seconds.

Is your pulse higher or lower than before you started jumping or running? When else does your heart rate/pulse change? Does your pulse feel stronger or softer now? What happens if you run and/or jump for longer? What happens to your heart rate if you lie down and relax for a minute? What can you do to lower your heart rate/pulse? Why would you want to? Does your breathing change when you run/jump? Does it change again after you have stopped running/jumping?