

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- **Pulse**
- **Tips**
- **Margarita Chicken**
- **Medication Timing**

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## What is my Pulse?

**What is my Pulse?** Your pulse is another term for your heart rate. In the picture to the right, the pulse is displayed at the bottom. It is usually displayed on most automated blood pressure cuffs either below the blood pressure reading or out to the side of it. It is just as important as the blood pressure and is another marker of circulation. The pulse or heart rate is the number of times the heart beats in a minute. This reading can also be obtained by finding the pulse (in the wrist or neck usually) and counting how many times it “pulses” within a minute. A normal pulse is 60-100 beats per minute. In people that are very fit or that are athletes, it is not uncommon to have a pulse that is less than 60 bpm.

### What can make the pulse go down?



A low pulse or heart rate can be caused by a number of things. As previously stated, sometimes a person is just very healthy or physically fit and that causes the heart rate to be slower. Many things can cause the pulse to be abnormally low such as medications, thyroid disease, hypothermia, sleep, and certain procedures. Sometimes a slow heart rate will occur when someone vomits or bears down too hard. The most common medications that slow the heart rate down include beta blockers (ex: metoprolol,

atenolol, carvedilol, sotalol), calcium channel blockers (cardizem, verapamil), digoxin, amiodarone, and clonidine. The conduction system of the heart can also become diseased or damaged. If this occurs, it can cause the pulse or heart rate to be lower than normal.

### Can a low pulse cause symptoms?

Absolutely. Symptoms of a low pulse or low heart may include dizziness, lightheadedness, passing out or nearly passing out, chest pain, shortness of breath, and fatigue. If symptoms are present, then seek medical attention.

### What can make the pulse go up?

Many things can cause and elevated pulse or elevated heart rate. Some things, like pain, are normal physiological responses of the body. The pulse should increase with exercise as well. In young adults, the pulse or heart rate may increase up to 200 bpm. (4,5). (cont...page 3)

## Tip of the Month

### Tips for Medication Safety:

1. Bring all of your medications in bottles into each appointment. Just get a little bag or sack to carry them in. This way there is no question as to what you are taking.
2. Know why you are taking each medication.
3. Know if the medication should be taken with or without food.
4. Check your expiration dates, especially for medications that are not taken on a daily basis.
5. Always check with the pharmacist before cutting or crushing a medication.



# Margarita Chicken



Recipe from  
“Breaking the Salt  
Habit” by Erik  
Williams. (1).

## Ingredients:

1. 4-6 oz. Boneless, Skinless Chicken Breast
2. 1 can of Frozen Margarita Mix
3. 1\4 cup Fresh Cilantro
4. 1\2 tsp. Cumin

## Directions:

1. Combine all ingredients in a small resealable bag.
2. Let marinate for 6-8 hours.
3. Grill on low heat. An internal temperature of 165 degrees Fahrenheit is recommended.

**Suggestion:** Serve over rice.

## Nutrition Info

Yields 4 servings  
1 Serving = 1 6 oz. chicken breast

Calories: 278  
Total Fat: 2g  
Sat Fat: <1g  
Cholesterol: 99mg  
Potassium: 443mg  
Carbohydrates: 25g  
Protein: 39g  
Fiber: 0g  
Sugar: 23g  
Sodium: 111mg

**Quote of the Month:** “Things work out the best for those who make the best of how things work out.”  
John Wooden

## Did you Know?

Did you know that the timing of your medications is very important? Do you know what time it is best to take your medications? If not, you may want to sit down with a pharmacist or one of your healthcare providers and ask about the timing of your medication. Coumadin (Warfarin) is generally recommended to take in the evening. It should be taken the same time everyday and can be taken with or without food. The reason the evening is recommended is in case the level (INR) is too high, then the dose can be held or adjusted for that day. Synthroid (Levothyroxine) is a drug used to treat hypothyroidism. It is best to take Synthroid in the morning on an empty stomach. It should only be taken with a glass of water. There should be no eating or drinking for 30 minutes to an hour after taking it. (2,3).

There are many drugs that are to be taken twice daily. Most of the time this means every 12 hours. There may be some exceptions so always check with the pharmacist or your healthcare provider to be sure. Some common cardiac medications that need to be taken every 12 hours include Coreg (Carvedilol), Betapace (Sotalol), Pradaxa (Dabigatran), Eliquis (Abixaban), and Tikosyn (Dofetilide). If a blood thinner such as Eliquis or Pradaxa is taken too close together, there is increased risk of bleeding. If it is taken too far apart, then there is increased chance of getting a stroke. Another commonly seen mistake is taking Metoprolol Tartrate once daily. This medication is a twice daily medication because it is short acting. There is a long acting Metoprolol called Toprol XL or Metoprolol Succinate that may be given once daily. Make sure of which form you have.

While in an 80 year old individual, the pulse may go upwards of 140 bpm during exercise. Physical or emotional stress or anxiety can increase the heart rate as well. There are external factors such as medications that can make the heart rate increase. Common drugs include stimulants, thyroid medications, atropine, and some over the counter medications for the common cold. Stimulant drugs are commonly used to treat ADHD (Ex: Adderall) and can be used for weight loss (Ex: Phentermine). Alcohol, nicotine, and caffeine also can raise the heart rate. Sometimes the heart rate goes up in response to something wrong within the body. Fever, inflammation, infection, low blood pressure, dehydration, thyroid disease, anemia, heart failure, heart attack, and blood clots in the lung can all cause the heart rate to elevate. Other times, it is an abnormal heart rhythm. There are numerous heart rhythms that can go fast cause the cause the heart rate to go fast. These include atrial fibrillation, atrial flutter, supraventricular tachycardia, atrial tachycardia, and ventricular tachycardia.



**Does an elevated pulse cause any symptoms?** It can but it doesn't always. Symptoms can include feeling the heart racing or feeling palpitations, chest pain, shortness of breath, dizziness, lightheadedness, and passing out. If any of these symptoms occur, it is important to seek medical attention.

**How is an abnormal pulse treated?** Well it depends on the situation. For slow heart rate, reversible factors need to be ruled out first. If medication is causing it, then sometimes the medication can be changed. If the heart rate continues to be slow or if there is a significant conduction abnormality especially if symptoms are present, then a pacemaker may need to be placed. If the pulse is fast, reversible factors are treated. For example, if there is infection, that is treated first. If the pulse is elevated due to an abnormal rhythm, then it depends on what the rhythm is and what symptoms are present. The general rule is to use medications to get the heart rate back into a normal range. Other things can be done to treat abnormal rhythms as well which may include a cardioversion (shocking the heart) or an ablation. An ablation is a catheter based procedure that can eliminate the abnormal circuit that is causing the heart to race. If the rhythm is life threatening, then a defibrillator may need to be placed. (4).