Why Is Your Target Heart Rate Important?

Heart Rate Allows You to Know How Hard You’re Working
If your goal is to improve fitness, then monitoring your heart rate is going to be the best indicator of how hard you’re working. We use our heart rate monitors to help us to look at the rise of our heart rate. There’s a standard equation to figure your target heart rate zone; called the Karvonen Method. We find your theoretical max heart rate, which is 220 minus your age, and then we multiply that theoretical max heart rate by certain percentages set by the American Academy of Sports Medicine.

- \( 220 - \text{age} = \text{theoretical max heart rate} \)
- \( \text{theoretical max heart rate} \times \_\% = \text{target heart rate zone} \)

Your Target Heart Rate Zone Varies
On the lower side, for someone who’s just beginning to work out, that percentage might be 55-65 percent multiplied by the remainder of 220 minus your age. And on the upper side of the equation, that number might be 90 percent multiplied by the remainder of 220 minus your age.
Those final numbers are going to give you a rough estimate of your target heart rate zone. If you’re working out within that range then you’ll be improving your fitness. Those are guidelines set by the American College of Sports Medicine which is ACSM, which provides the guidelines for fitness improvement.

Monitoring Your Heart Rate Allows You to Know if You’re Improving Fitness
Monitoring your heart rate gives you an idea of whether or not you are actually working hard enough to improve fitness and, on the same side of the coin, if you’re working too hard then you might be hindering your progress. A lot of times people will go and do a class that’s really high intensity but they’re actually working above where they should be, which can hinder progress.

Heart Rate Allows You to Calculate Calories
The other thing with heart rate is that it gives us an indication of intensity, and intensity is how we calculate calories that are burned during a workout. As we increase our heart rate intensity we certainly increase our calories burned, but at the same time an increase in intensity can mean an increase in potential injury.

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