

# Heart Rate Predicts Women's Heart Risk

## Study Shows Resting Heart Rate May Predict Heart Attacks in Postmenopausal Women

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A woman's resting pulse rate is a good predictor of her [heart attack](#) risk regardless of other risk factors, such as [smoking](#) and alcohol consumption, researchers say. A team of scientists analyzed records of 129,135 postmenopausal women who had no history of heart problems. Their pulse rates were measured at the start of the study. The researchers found that during almost eight years of follow-up, women with the highest heart rates -- at or above 76 beats per minute -- were much more likely to suffer a heart attack than the women with the lowest resting pulse rates, 62 beats per minute or less.

This association held true regardless of factors such as [physical activity](#) levels and did not differ between races or women with or without diabetes, [high blood pressure](#), or [cholesterol](#) abnormalities, according to the study authors, led by Judith Hsia, MD, a professor at George Washington University School of Medicine and senior director of clinical research for the pharmaceutical company AstraZeneca.

Even after adjusting for factors which might affect resting heart rate, including nervousness, depression, tobacco use, alcohol use, and [body mass index](#), women with higher baseline heart rates were still at greater risk for heart attack during follow-up. The relationship between resting heart rate and coronary risk was stronger in women less than 65 years old than in women over 65.

The data for the study came from the Women's Health Initiative. Women with a history of heart attack, [stroke](#), or similar serious problems were excluded. Resting heart rate was obtained by trained observers after the women sat "quietly" for five minutes.

Although more expensive and elaborate methods are available to assess risk, Hsia and colleagues "found that simple measurement of resting pulse independently predicts coronary events, but not stroke, in post-menopausal women."

The connection "is less than the association with cigarette smoking or diabetes mellitus but might be large enough to be clinically meaningful and is independent of physical activity.