

## Unit 5 Lesson 2 What is a Pulse?

**What is a pulse?** It is the pressure the artery experiences when blood is being pumped by the heart.

Try this activity with a tennis ball.

- Squeeze the tennis ball for 10 seconds
- Squeeze the tennis ball for 30 seconds
- Squeeze the tennis ball for 60 seconds

How does your hand feel? Is it tired? Why is it tired?

Squeezing the tennis ball is similar to the force needed to squeeze blood out of the heart. The blood being pumped out of the heart is called your pulse.

**Find Your Pulse** Where can you feel your pulse? You can feel your pulse where the arteries are the closest to the skin's surface.

Here are two most common places to feel your pulse:

- Left side of your neck
- Your wrist

You should also be able to feel your pulse in these locations: behind your knee, your inner thigh, and your elbow.

**Take Your Pulse** What fingers do you use when you are taking a pulse?

- Use your index finger and your middle finger.

Hint: Don't use your thumb because it has a pulse of its very own!

### Pulse Rates

An adult heart should pump about 70-90 beats a minute. Kids hearts pump at about 80 – 90 beats per minute. Why do you think there is a difference?

Think about this. A mouse has a heart rate of 500 beats per minute, an elephant about 20, and a blue whale less than 5 beats per minute!!! Smaller animals have smaller hearts that beat faster, because they use up energy faster. The same thing works for kids and adults.

## Pulse Rate and Physical Activity

What will happen to your pulse if you increase your activity? What will your heart do?

First check your pulse rate as you are sitting. Instead of counting the number of beats for a full minute, do this:

- Count the number of beats you feel in 10 seconds and multiply by 6.

Try a number of different activities that you can do in the classroom and see if your pulse rate increases. For example, walk around the classroom for one minute or do jumping jacks for one minute.

Chart the results below. Discuss the results with the class.

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