

SLOW HEART RATE (BRADYCARDIA)

Bradycardia is a resting heart rate that is slower than normal. The normal heart rate for adults averages between 60 and 100 beats a minute. Healthy people can have bradycardia, but it can also be a sign of serious disease. It is normal for people with high cardiovascular fitness (athletes, regular aerobic exercisers) to have a slow resting heart rate. Some factors that cause or aggravate bradycardia include certain kinds of *heart disease* (heart block or conduction disorders), certain medications, thyroid disease (hypothyroidism), or pain. The heart rate may be temporarily slowed by the central nervous system during episodes of vomiting or bowel movements.

Symptoms *may* include:

- Fatigue
- Weakness
- Dizziness
- Fainting
- Chest pain
- Difficulty breathing or "catching your breath"

What *your* doctor can do:

- Diagnose the disease by asking about your symptoms and doing a physical exam.
- Order and review an *ECG* (electrocardiogram, which is used to record the electrical activity of the heart).
- Review medications that you take.
- Determine treatment if necessary. No treatment is needed if you have no symptoms during activity.

If your episodes cause symptoms, your doctor may:

- Prescribe any of several medications to relieve symptoms.
- Adjust or discontinue medications that may be causing bradycardia.
- Discuss with you the possibility of inserting a *pacemaker* (electrically controls the heart rate).

What *you* can do:

- Keep your doctor informed of any changes in your medications
- Avoid any medications that seem to produce symptoms

Contact your doctor if you have symptoms of bradycardia.

Seek immediate medical assistance if you have bradycardia and become dizzy, weak, experience fainting or chest pain!