

VITAL SIGNS: VITAL CHOICES

Vital signs are like a dashboard for your body. Numbers such as blood pressure, resting heart rate, and pulse pressure give you clues about how hard your heart is working, how your arteries are functioning, and how your nervous system is responding to stress over time.

Blood pressure measures how hard your blood pushes against artery walls. When it stays **high, it strains the heart and damages vessels.**

The nervous system plays a major role—**one large study found that 15 minutes of slow breathing at about 6 breaths per minute lowered blood pressure in adults with hypertension.** This shows how supporting the vagus nerve can influence this vital sign.

Resting heart rate is another useful marker.

A consistently high number can reflect stress, poor sleep, dehydration, illness, or low fitness.

Over time, regular movement, good hydration, and solid sleep habits often help bring it down.

Tracking these numbers isn't about perfection—it's about noticing patterns so you can make informed choices, whether that's more walking, a calmer evening routine, or checking in with a provider. Understanding your vital signs gives you insight into what your body needs.



Vital signs are feedback.

They help you respond with curiosity instead of fear.

Natarajan, A., Emir-Farinas, H., & Su, H.-W. (2023). Mindful breathing as an effective technique in the management of hypertension. *Frontiers in Physiology*, 14, 1339873. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fphys.2023.1339873>