

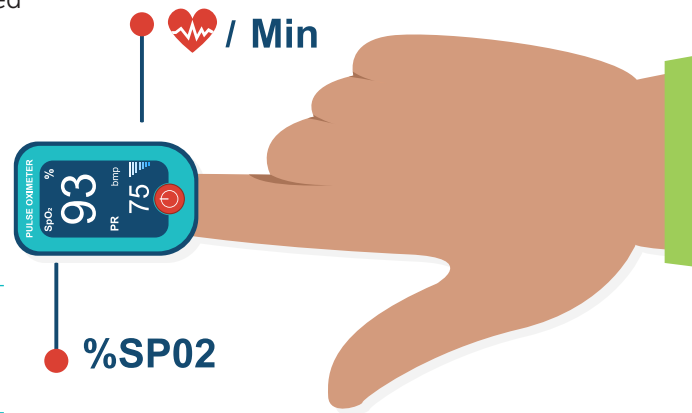
Using a pulse oximeter to check you are OK

Why do I need a pulse oximeter?

Your healthcare provider may have given you a small device called a pulse oximeter because you have symptoms of COVID-19

A pulse oximeter is used to test:

1. How fast your heart is beating (PR bpm).
In adults, a normal resting heart/pulse rate is between 50 and 90 beats per minute (bpm).
2. How well you are breathing. To do this it checks how much oxygen is in your blood (%SpO2).
A normal blood oxygen level is between 95% and 100%



Knowing these things helps your doctor or nurse tell if you are getting better or becoming more unwell. This helps you get the treatment you need at the right time.

How does a pulse oximeter work?

A pulse oximeter works by shining beams of light through your skin and measuring changes in light absorption in your blood. This process does not hurt.

How to use your pulse oximeter:

You should take your readings two or three times a day, and if you begin to feel more unwell.

1. Remove any nail polish, false nails, long nails or jewelry on your finger.
2. Wash your hands with warm water and thoroughly dry them.
3. Sit in an upright position and make sure you have been resting for about five minutes.
4. Turn on the device, attach the clip to the finger next to your thumb or your middle finger, so that the tip of your finger is touching the end of the device. The palm of your hand should be facing down, and the screen of the pulse oximeter should be facing up so you can read it.
5. Keep your hand and fingers still and breathe normally and restfully for at least a minute.
6. Once the numbers have not changed for five seconds, record both results in your daily symptom diary.



- Your doctor or nurse may ask also you to take a reading after walking around the room for a few minutes.
- You might be asked to use an app to record your symptoms.

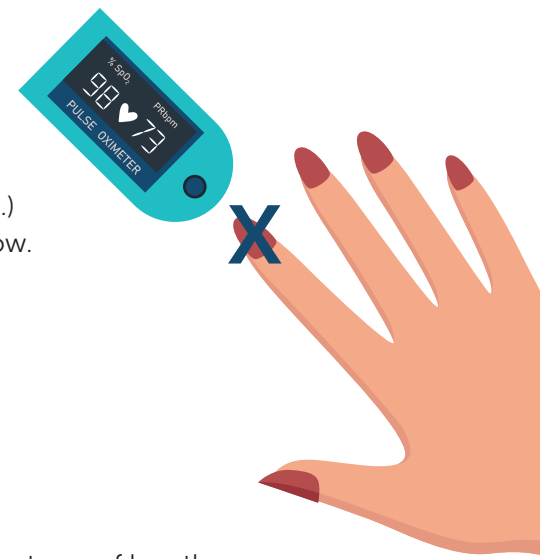
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An Australian Government Initiative

www.ourphn.org.au

Accuracy of pulse oximeters:

Pulse oximeters may sometimes over or under-estimate oxygen levels and are affected by factors like:

- nail polish, acrylic or gel nails, long or artificial nails or tattoos,
- not all pulse oximeters are the same quality and accuracy,
- darker skin pigmentation,
- a change in position of the pulse oximeter attachment,
- using the same finger every day for regular measurements (the middle finger of your dominant hand gives the best measurements.)
- making sure the pulse oximeter is cleaned and the battery level is not low.



Smartphone and smartwatches are not accurate and should not be used. Home use of pulse oximeters is safer when overseen by a doctor or nurse. Readings should not be used as the only indicator of the severity of illness.

When to get more help?

- If your oxygen blood level is less than 95% you will usually feel some shortness of breath.
- If you feel fine, take another reading from a different finger.

If the reading is consistently under 95%, contact your doctor or nurse as soon as possible.

You should go to hospital or call Triple Zero (000) if you have severe symptoms like:



Your pulse oximeter says your oxygen level is 92% or less.



Difficulty breathing even when walking around the house



Breathing has worsened



Coughing up blood



Bad chest pains



Collapsing or fainting



Feeling cold and sweaty, with pale or blotchy skin



A rash that looks like small bruises or bleeding under the skin



Feeling agitated, confused or very drowsy



Stopped urinating or urinating much less than usual

For further information: National Coronavirus Helpline (interpreters available): 1800 020 080
134 COVID (13 42 68) for testing and other COVID-19 advice
13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84) for confidential health advice from a nurse