

The Healthy Living Report

What is Heart Rate Variability and How Will it Help Me?

Hear Rate Variability is a measure of the variance in time between heartbeats. In other words, it's the fluctuations in your heartbeat, and how steady your heart rate is overall. It's often referred to as HRV, although that acronym refers to something slightly different. There are many benefits from raising your HRV, such as reducing stress, lowering blood pressure and risk of cardiovascular disease, improving immune response, reducing the risk of stroke and — perhaps most importantly for athletes — increasing performance. This article explains what HRV is and why you should care about it

HRV defined

Heart Rate Variability refers to the variance in time between heartbeats. HRV is an extremely useful metric that is largely overlooked by the wider strength training and fitness communities. HRV is often viewed as something that is only relevant to people who are into meditation and mindfulness, or who practice certain healing modalities. In reality, HRV is something that can be of benefit to anyone who wants to improve their health and performance. HRV is often

described as the 'variability of the heartbeat'. In fact, it is the variability of the intervals between successive heartbeats.



So HRV isn't the same as 'heart rate variability'. Heart rate variability is specifically describing the amplitude (the distance between peaks and troughs) of your heart rate over time.

Why is HRV important?

Heart Rate Variability is an extremely useful metric that is often missed by strength trainees and athletes. It can give some insights into the health of your body and can also help you to improve your performance by reducing your training load. If HRV is high, then it means that your autonomic nervous system (ANS) is doing a good job of regulating homeostasis in your body. In other words, your body is functioning well. Low HRV on the

other hand, means that your ANS is struggling to keep you healthy. Low HRV is often a sign of an overtrained or unhealthy body.

HRV can give us insight into our health because a healthy body will generally have a higher HRV than an unhealthy body. This doesn't mean an unhealthy body can't have a high HRV — there are many exceptions to this rule. By using HRV you can get a general idea of how your body is functioning, and whether you need to improve your recovery, diet or other aspects of your lifestyle. A high HRV is generally a sign of a healthy body and a low HRV is usually a sign of an unhealthy body.

How to raise HRV?

Several factors influence HRV and many things you can do to raise it. The main thing is to reduce stress — both in your daily life and during exercise. Other factors can be manipulated to help increase HRV, such as sleep, diet and exercise. A quick way to get your HRV up is to take a short (30-minute) break from whatever you're doing. You can do whatever you like during this break, just make sure that you don't think about work. If you're training, then use the break to do something else unrelated.

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HRV and Recovery

There are many benefits of having a high HRV, the most important being improved recovery. HRV can be used as a measure of how well your body is recovering, so if you find that your HRV is low, you can take some steps to improve it. Having a low HRV is often a sign that you need to improve your recovery, so if your HRV is low, you can use some of the methods listed above to improve your recovery and increase your HRV. Having a high HRV is also a good sign that your recovery is good, and that you are managing the stress in your life very well.



HRV and Performance

Having a high HRV is a sign that your body is functioning well, and is perhaps the most important thing about HRV. There are some indications that a high HRV is also

linked to higher performance, but more research is needed to confirm that. However, if you have a low HRV and take steps to improve it, you will likely see an increase in performance. This is because a low HRV is often a sign that you are overtraining, and therefore need to reduce your training load by taking some recovery days. Having a higher HRV means that you can push yourself harder in training and that your body deals better with the training load.

Problems with HRV measures

The main issue with HRV as a metric is that it is difficult to measure. Most HRV devices and apps have a small sample size, and often use sampling methodologies that are not reliable enough for big data analysis. This means that although HRV is useful, it can't be used as a reliable metric for everyone. For example, if you have high blood pressure, then you should probably not use HRV to track your progress because

having high blood pressure may make your HRV appear low when it is actually high. Other people may have problems with HRV because they are simply not good at regulating their autonomic nervous system. This can be trained, but certain people may always have a low HRV because they don't know how to regulate their bodies well.

Final Words

Heart Rate Variability is an extremely important metric that is often missed by strength trainees and athletes. It can give some insights into the health of your body and can also help you to improve your performance by reducing your training load. There are many ways to increase HRV, such as reducing stress, sleeping more, and exercising. Having a high HRV is a sign that your autonomic nervous system is functioning well, and that your body is recovering well. Having a low HRV is often a sign that you need to improve your recovery, or that you are overtraining and need to reduce your training load.

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