

Have you checked your Heart Rate Variability lately?

People have long been interested in the one biomarker that captures their overall health. We've seen cholesterol, LDL, BMI and CRP. These go in and out of vogue as researchers find new markers that bring in other factors. Just one marker doesn't work as our biology is complex and not easy to reduce to a single number.

There is one biomarker, however, that serves as a broad indicator of overall health and fitness: heart rate variability (HRV), or the variation in the intervals between heart beats. If your heart beats like a metronome, with intervals of identical length between each pulse, you have low heart rate variability; this is the result of serious stress. If your heart beats follow a more variable pattern, with beat intervals of varying length, you have high heart rate variability; this indicates good fitness and ability to respond to life.

In general, a **high HRV indicates dominance of the parasympathetic response**, the side of the autonomic nervous system that promotes relaxation, digestion, sleep, and recovery. The parasympathetic system is also known as the “feed and breed” or “rest and digest” system.

A **low HRV indicates dominance of the sympathetic response**, the fight or flight side of the nervous system associated with stress, overtraining, and inflammation.

Therein lies the beauty of HRV: it offers a glimpse into the activity of our autonomic nervous system, an aspect of our physiology normally shrouded in mystery.

Ambitious athletes and weekend warriors can use HRV to be sure their bodies are benefitting from the stresses of their activities. Using HRV, you can see your best approach for healing and strengthening - low HRV needs support with nutritional and therapeutic strategies that encourage rest and repair ([Svaroopa yoga](#), [reiki](#), [Qigong](#), [nutritional supplements](#), [homeopathy and essential oils](#)) while high HRV means you can use positive stress ([athletic training](#), [stimulating herbs](#), [oils and homeopathics](#)) to further strengthen your body.

We can also test your body for response to electromagnetic fields created by your cell phone. Using the scan as a continuous monitor, we can see how your HRV changes when you go from no electromagnetic input to turning on your phone and cruising through your regular routine of text messages, internet and phone calls. The invisibility of these fields has left most of us hoping for the best, but not really sure how our bodies are dealing with the regular exposure. While some have a reasonably high tolerance, others are struggling and benefit from knowing what's really going on in their nervous systems. There are strategies to deal with our increasingly wireless world, but if you don't know you have a problem, you may be blaming other input for

your headaches, anxiety, restlessness, insomnia or distress. Dr. Magda Havas, Associate Professor at Trent University, in Peterborough, Canada, uses HRV in her research on the health effects of many forms of electromagnetic radiation - <http://www.magdahavas.com/>

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