

Heart Rate

Heart rate of a normal adult patient at rest is between 60 and 100 beats/min. A heart rate slower than 60 beats/min is called bradycardia; a heart rate faster than 100 beats/min is called tachycardia. To determine the heart rate from a recording made by modern ECG machines is relatively simple. These machines make a 12-lead ECG tracing over a 10-second period. One row starts with lead I, switches to aVR to be followed by V1, and ends with V4. A second row starts with lead II and records aVL, V2, and V5 in sequence while a third row records lead III, aVF, V3, and V6 in sequence. Nearly all machines offer continuous recording of lead II in a fourth row and some others offer even more. Despite lead-switching in mid-course, recording is continuous without interruption over the 10-second period. Therefore heart rate per minute can be determined by counting the number of beats on any one row and multiplying this number by 6.

