

VITAL SIGNS

- Vital signs are measurements of the body's most basic functions.
- Vital signs are useful in detecting or monitoring medical problems.
- Sample dialogue: "Good morning, may I take your vital signs"?

The four main vital signs routinely monitored by medical professionals and healthcare providers include:

- Body temperature
- Pulse rate
- Respiration rate
- Blood pressure (Blood pressure is not considered a vital sign, but is often measured along with the vital signs.)

Body Temperature

- Body temperature is a measure of the body's ability to generate and get rid of heat.

A person's body temperature can be taken in any of the following ways:

- Orally
- Rectally
- Axillary
- By ear
- By skin

Pulse Rate

- The pulse rate is a measurement of the heart rate, or the number of times the heart beats per minute.

The pulse can be found on the following:

- Side of the lower neck
- Inside of the elbow
- At the wrist

Respiration Rate

- The respiration rate is the number of breaths a person takes per minute.
- The rate is usually measured when a person is at rest and simply involves counting the number of breaths for one minute by counting how many times the chest rises.

Blood Pressure

- The force of the blood pushing against the artery walls.
- Two numbers are recorded when measuring blood pressure: Systolic and Diastolic
- Both the systolic and diastolic pressures are recorded as "mm Hg" (millimeters of mercury).

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

- Why does a person need to check his/her vital signs?
- What happens to a person with abnormal body temperature?
- How do you check the pulse rate of a person?
- Give situations when a person's respiration rate increases.
- What are the things to consider before taking the blood pressure?