



## Feel the beat!

**Curriculum Idea:** Your heart beats at different rates depending on your level of activity. It is important to keep your heart healthy and strong by having periods of activity and rest everyday.

**Related Episodes:** Go to Sleep Wartz, Take Care of Yourself

**Ages:** 4-6

**Subject:** Health, Biology

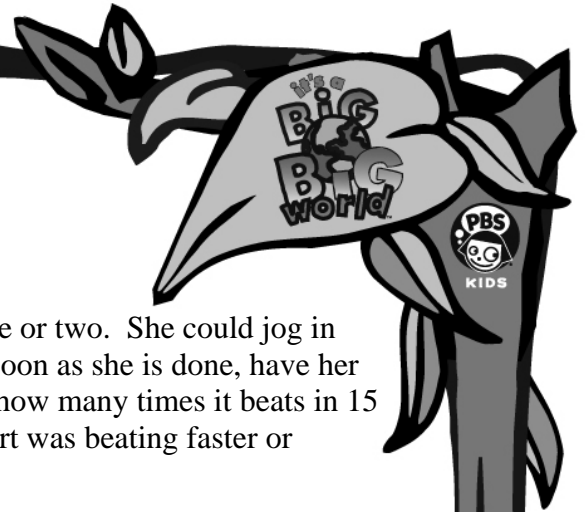
**Skills:** Comparison, Counting, Critical thinking

**Materials:** Watch, paper, pencil/pen

**Directions:** Tell your child that you are going to learn about her heartbeat! Ask her where her heart is and help her put her hand over it (it is located almost in the center of her chest, a bit to the left). Tell her that her heart is a large muscle. Muscles help our bodies move. Her heart pumps, or beats, and this moves blood to all parts of her body – her brain, eyes, fingers, and even her toes! Blood carries oxygen with it to these body parts, all of which need oxygen to stay healthy. That is why our heart is a very important muscle in our bodies and we need to take care of it.

Help her feel her heartbeat by putting her hand over her chest, or finding her pulse by putting two fingers on her wrist or just under her jaw bone. She could also put her head against your chest and listen to your heartbeat. Once she has felt or heard it, ask her to copy the beat. Can she clap her hands or hit the table to make the same sound?

Next, tell her that you are going to help her observe how her heart beats faster when she exercises. First, have her feel her heartbeat again and help her count how many times it beats in 15 seconds (you may need to feel her pulse and count for her, or ask her to say “beat” every time she feels it while you count them silently). Write down how many beats there were in those 15 seconds.



Then, have her do some exercise or physical activity for a minute or two. She could jog in place, do jumping jacks, dance vigorously, or do push-ups. As soon as she is done, have her feel her heartbeat again. Does she feel it beating faster? Count how many times it beats in 15 seconds. Compare it to her resting heartbeat. Ask her if her heart was beating faster or slower after her activity. Does she know why?

**Talk About It:** Explain that when she exercises or feels excited, the rate that her heart beats can speed up. This is because our bodies need more oxygen when we are working hard. And, when her heart beats faster, it is moving blood through her body faster.

These periods of activity are important because her heart is a muscle. Just like people exercise muscles in their arms and legs to make them strong, it is important to exercise our hearts to help keep them strong. When she exercises and makes her heart beat faster, she is helping build the muscle in her heart to keep it healthy and strong. This means that it can beat quickly and strongly when it needs to pump blood and oxygen through her body.

Talk about how it is important for her heart, as well as her entire body, to have periods of rest and exercise everyday. Ask her to think about all of the different types of rest and activity that she does every week. Her rest time could include quiet time reading books, daily naps, and sleep at night. Explain that this rest time helps keep her feeling healthy. If she does not get rest everyday, she will feel tired and will not have the energy to play or do activities during the day. Similarly, if she does not have periods of activity everyday, such as playing, taking walks, or participating in a sport, her body will feel sluggish.

**Take It Further:** Different people's hearts beat at different rates. Have your child ask other friends or family members to participate in the activity by counting their resting heartbeat and their heartbeat after a period of activity. Then, compare them to her heartbeat. See who has the fastest and slowest heartbeats after periods of rest and periods of activity.