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Pulse Sites on the Body

Temporal:

Carotid: The carotid artery is an easily accessible site that is used in cases of physiological shock, cardiac arrest, or when other sites are not palpable. If the condition of a patient worsens, this causes cardiac output to decline. Using the carotid artery site is the best way to assess the pulse because the heart will continue to pump blood through the carotid artery to the brain for as long as possible.

Apical: The apical pulse is one of the most common sites to check for a pulse. If the radial pulse demonstrates dysrhythmias or is covered by a dressing or cast, this is the next best site to test for a pulse. An apical pulse can be tested for patients who take medications that affect the heart rate, giving a more accurate assessment of the heart rate.

Brachial:

Radial: The radial pulse is one of the most common sites to check for a pulse. This site can be used to teach patients how to monitor their own heart rates, especially those who are among athletes, or patients who take cardiac medications. The radial pulse also demonstrates the status of circulation to the hand.

Ulnar:

Femoral:

Popliteal:

Dorsalis Pedis:

Posterior Tibial: