

Numetrex Heart Rate Monitor Sports Bra

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After nearly 15 years of wearing heart-rate monitors with chest straps, our tester has permanent scars on her ribs and back from chafing. Over the years, she has tested attempts at sport bras that incorporate heart-rate transmitting straps, new straps and various heart-rate-monitoring systems, but none has really solved the issue of comfort or completely eliminated chafing. In fact, most of the sport bras ended up in the Goodwill box after one wear, they were so poorly conceived, designed and implemented.



The Numetrex system by Textronics Inc. is a breath of fresh air. It is made of an incredibly well-fitting, seamless nylon/Lycra material that fits like a second skin. Directly knit into the support band are sensors that take the place of the electrodes that normally are part of the transmitting strap (that yucky thing, normally plastic, that causes the chafing and discomfort). In the center of the band is a small pocket that allows you to snap the small Polar WearLink transmitter directly onto the bra – no strap needed – so it can then communicate your heart rate to the receiver (the watch) on your wrist.

We'll admit, we were skeptical, having been there, done that and been frustrated all too many times. Once the bra was in our hands, we were still a bit skeptical – although it sure looked and felt nice -- since we found a user had to snap the small WearLink device **INSIDE** the strap facing **IN** rather than out. You do that by sorta wiggling your fingers into what basically looks like a really big buttonhole at the center of your chest on the inside of the support band, fumbling around a bit for the snaps, tucking in and snapping down the WearLink, then tucking it all back inside through the buttonhole.



Surprisingly, it worked much more easily than expected. We also wondered about reception since some dampness is needed to kick it in; we thought fabric might take longer to connect. Wrong again. In only about 3–4 minutes, our heart rate was blinking happily away on our watch. We tried it running, as well as in a very dry desert climate, both using a receiving watch and using equipment with heart–rate displays. At no time did it take more than 3–4 minutes to connect.

We must say it was a dream come true to be able to "wear" a heart rate monitor but lose the strap that was always a necessary evil. And, to top that, it looks nice — nice enough to wear without a shirt even on hot days.

Two caveats:

1. We are not sure how very heavy set or large–busted women would find this bra in its fit or in the band's ability to stay flat on the chest – necessary to keep the sensors picking up your heart rate. The company's size chart reports the ability for its three sizes (small, medium and large) to fit from 32A up to 36C, as well as 38B.

2. It would be incredibly easy to take off the bra after a workout, dump it in a heap, then toss it in the laundry ... WITH the WearLink transmitter since it's tucked inside and you don't really see it once snapped in. A big warning comes with the bra NOT to wash it with the transmitter. We didn't test ours through a wash cycle to see what would happen, but we don't expect the results would be pretty.

Nevertheless, for most women who exercise, this bra is a must–have. The only problem now is you need a complete wardrobe of bras for wear during the week unless you plan on washing the one bra daily – and having to buy that many bras could get expensive!

SNEWS® Rating: 4.5 hands clapping (1 to 5 hands clapping possible, with 5 clapping hands representing functional and design perfection)

Suggested Retail: Bra, \$45; bra with Polar WearLink transmitter, \$75; complete system, including bra with simple heart rate monitor and transmitter, \$115; complete system with bra and more advanced fitness monitor and transmitter, \$145.

For more information: www.numetrex.com.





Thanks again for reading and for your support of SNEWS®! We look forward to hearing from you anytime.

Cheers,

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