American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance

American Heart Association
Learn and Live®

About the Heart

Do you know what your heart does?

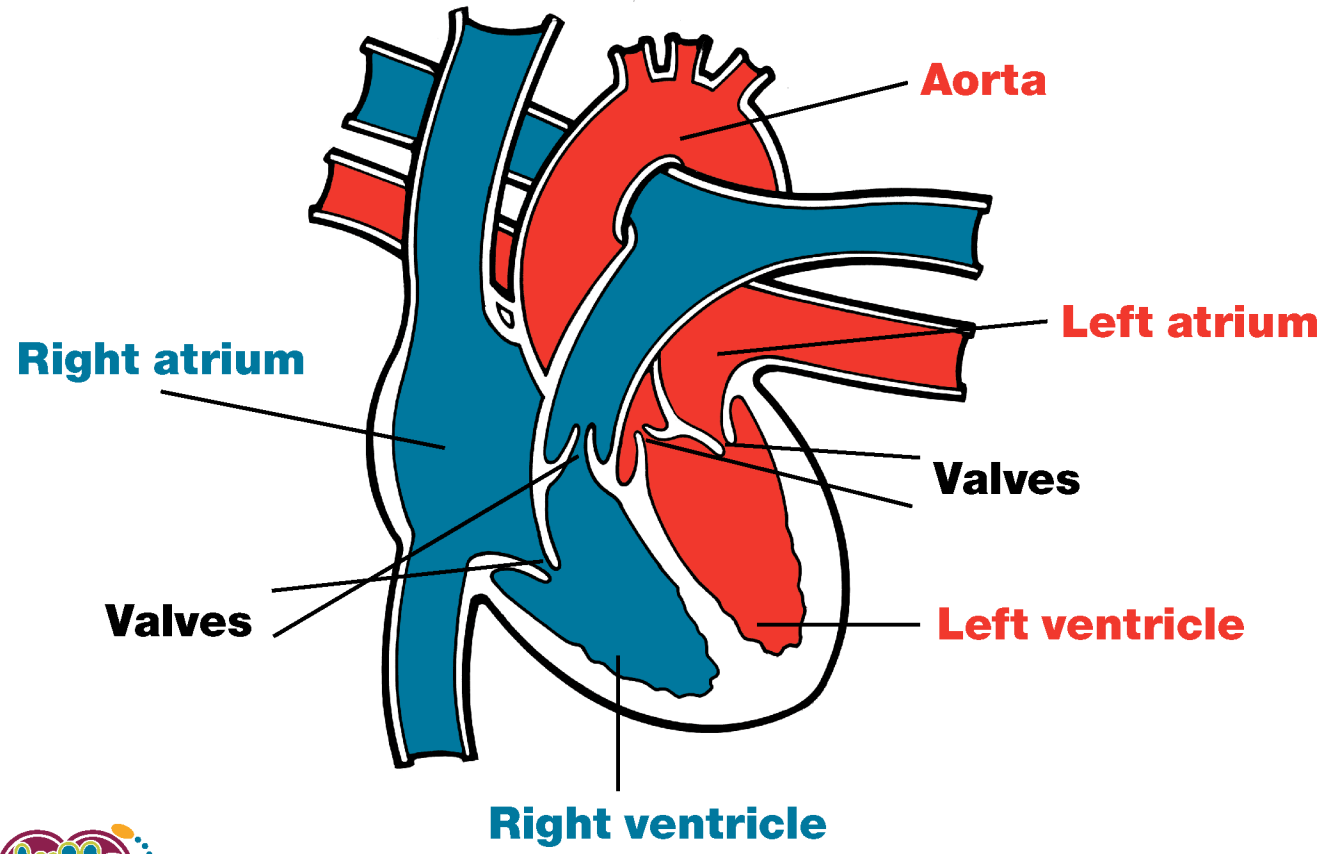
The heart is a powerful muscle that works like a pump. With each beat, it pushes bright red blood that carries oxygen and nutrients to the body's cells. After this blood has circulated through the body, it returns to the heart. When the blood returns, it is more bluish because it has given up its oxygen. When the heart pumps this blood to the lungs, it becomes red again and the whole process starts over.

Do you know where your heart is?

A person's heart is about the size of their fist. When you pledge allegiance to the flag, you place your hand over the left side of your chest. That is where most people think the heart is. Actually, the heart is in the middle of the chest. It fits snugly between your lungs.

Do you know how to keep your heart strong?

Because the heart is a muscle, it should be exercised to help keep it strong and healthy. To benefit your heart, you should be physically active for 30 minutes or more a day. Resting heart rate gives a good indication of cardiovascular fitness. A normal heart beats between 50 and 99 times per minute when you're resting. As you get in better shape, your resting heart rate will go down because your heart is more efficient.



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8/06CB0104