

How your heart works

- Your heart is about the size of your clenched fist. It lies in the front and middle of the chest, behind and slightly to the left of the breastbone
- Your body has a network of blood vessels called arteries and veins, which carry the blood pumped by your heart. Your heart, together with these blood vessels, help make up the circulatory system.
- Arteries carry blood away from the heart. The largest artery in your body is the aorta. It has branches which carry blood to your head, arms and legs, and organs inside the chest and abdomen.
- The first branches of the aorta are the coronary arteries. These run back on to the surface of the heart itself to give the heart muscle its own blood supply.
- Smaller branch arteries feed into even smaller blood vessels called capillaries, which cannot be seen with the naked eye. Oxygen and nutrients pass into body tissues from the capillaries; veins then carry blood back to the heart.

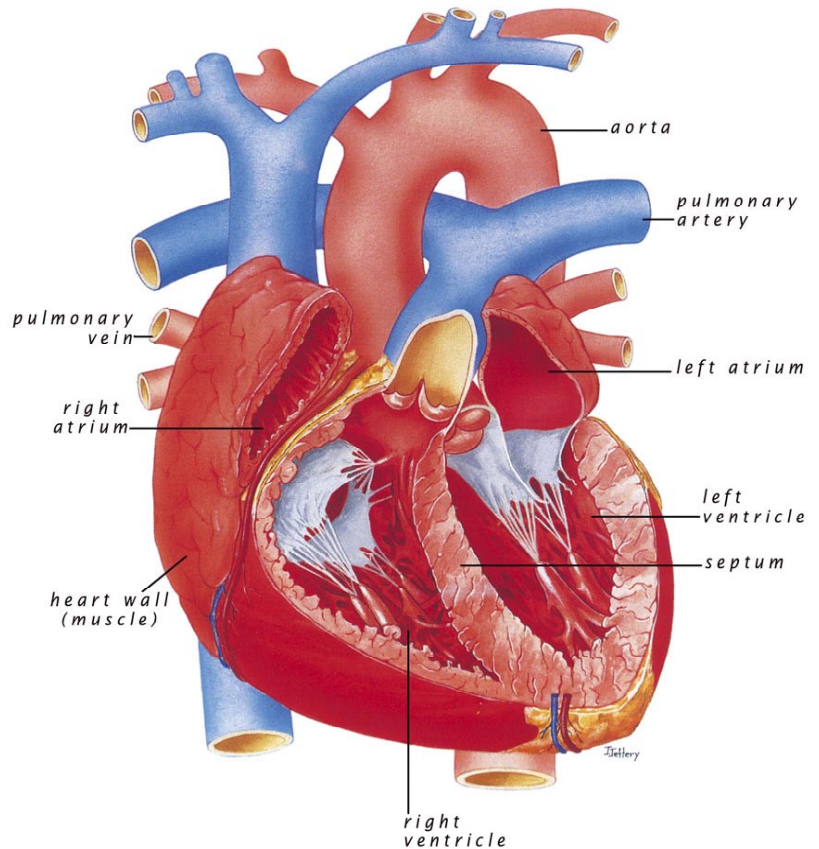
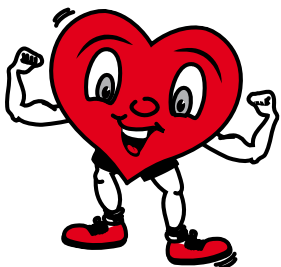


diagram from the Heart Foundation

HEARTBEAT

At rest, the heart beats approximately 60 to 100 times a minute. In children the heart rate is higher than in adults.

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