

How Your Heart Works

The heart is a muscular organ that pumps blood through the body. It is about the same size as your fist. Oxygen-poor blood enters the **right atrium** of the heart. Veins called the **inferior vena cava** and the **superior vena cava** carry the blood to the right atrium. The blood is then pumped into the **right ventricle**, and then on through the **pulmonary artery** to the lungs. In the lungs, the blood loses carbon dioxide and is enriched with oxygen. The now oxygen-rich (“oxygenated”) blood is then pumped back to the **left atrium** of the heart through the **pulmonary vein**. The blood then moves to the **left ventricle**, then through the **aorta**, and out to the rest of the body. This cycle is then repeated. Your heart pumps about 2,000 gallons (7,600 liters) of blood every day, and beats about 100,000 times per day.

Use the Heart Glossary on the next page to help you label the parts of your heart. Keep your heart healthy by getting at least 20 minutes of physical activity per day.

Remember: Your heart is a muscle. Keep it strong, and it will keep you strong!

