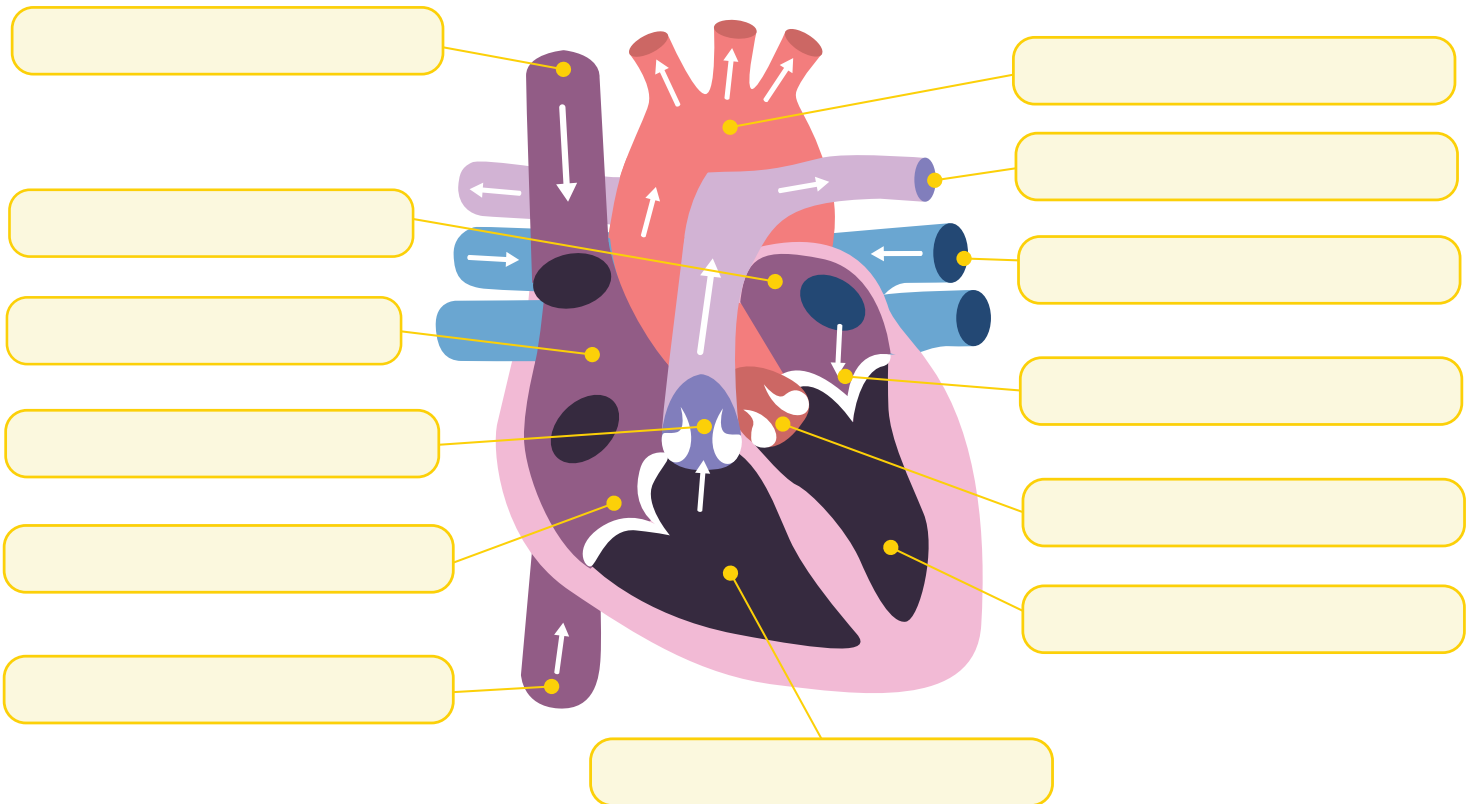


How Your Heart Works

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!





Heart Glossary



AORTA the biggest and longest artery in the body (an artery is a blood vessel that carries blood away from the heart). It carries oxygen-rich blood from the left ventricle out to the body.

INFERIOR VENA CAVA a large vein that carries oxygen-poor blood to the right atrium from the lower half of the body (a vein is a blood vessel that carries blood to the heart).

LEFT ATRIUM the left upper chamber of the heart. It receives oxygen-rich blood from the pulmonary vein coming from the lungs.

LEFT VENTRICLE the left lower chamber of the heart. The left ventricle pumps blood through the aortic valve into the aorta.

MITRAL VALVE the valve between the left atrium and the left ventricle. It prevents blood from flowing back from the ventricle to the atrium.

PULMONARY ARTERY the blood vessel that carries oxygen-poor blood from the right ventricle of the heart to the lungs.

PULMONARY VALVE the flaps between the right ventricle and the pulmonary artery.

PULMONARY VEIN the blood vessel that carries oxygenated blood from the lungs to the left atrium.

RIGHT ATRIUM the right upper chamber of the heart. The right atrium gets oxygen-poor blood from the body through the inferior vena cava and the superior vena cava.

RIGHT VENTRICLE the right lower chamber of the heart that pumps blood into the pulmonary artery.

SEPTUM the wall that separates the left and right sides of the heart.

SUPERIOR VENA CAVA a large vein that carries oxygen-poor blood from the upper parts of the body to the right atrium.

TRICUSPID VALVE the flaps between the right atrium and the right ventricle. It is made up of three leaf-like parts.