

How My Heart Works

Your heart

Your heart is very special! It makes your blood flow all around the body and lungs. It is inside your body, but you can feel it working, just place your hand on the left hand side of your chest; can you feel it beating?

It continually works, even when we are asleep. Did you know your heart beats 100,000 times a day?

Your heart rate

Your heart rate is the number of times your heart beats each minute. It changes depending on what you are doing. If you are watching TV or lying down, your heart rate will be slower. If you are running around and playing, or you get excited, your heart rate will be faster.

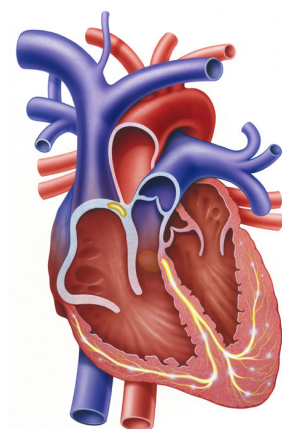
How your heart works

Your heart is a muscle which pumps blood to all parts of your body. It produces its own electricity to make the muscle work.

Your heart pumps by relaxing and squeezing. When it relaxes it fills up with blood and when it squeezes it pushes, or pumps the blood out.

Your heart has two chambers in the top half, the atria (**ay-tree-a**) and two in the bottom half, the ventricles (**ven-tri-cals**).

Each side of the heart has a different job to do. The right side of the heart pumps the blood through the lungs so it can pick up the oxygen from the air. Then the left side of the heart pumps this blood around the body, brain and muscles so they can use the oxygen it carries. The blood then gets back to the right side of the heart to do all this again.

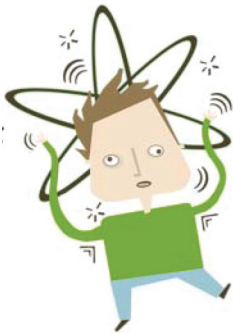


Things that could go wrong

Sometimes the electrical signal in the heart can go wrong and this will cause someone to have an unusual heartbeat. It may beat too fast, too slow or irregularly.



This is called an arrhythmia (**ar-rith-me-ar**) or heart rhythm disorder. If you have an arrhythmia you may feel dizzy, tired, short of breath, light headed, faint or in some cases you might feel a fluttering feeling or aches in your chest. These feelings are not very nice but there are ways to make them feel better.



Fix it

If someone has an arrhythmia they need to visit the doctor so that the type of arrhythmia can be diagnosed. Some arrhythmias do not need any treatments, but in some cases medicines can help, or special heart machines or devices might be suggested to make you feel much better.

Your heart is very special and you should always look after it.

