

About the Heart -> Normal Anatomy

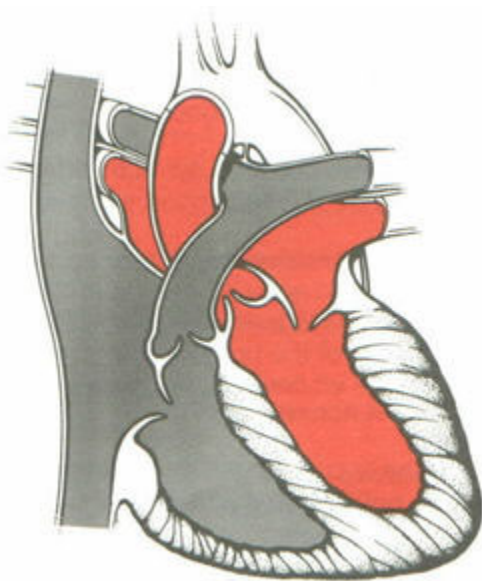
[pdf](#)

The normal heart is a strong, hardworking pump made of muscle tissue. It is about the size of a person's fist.

The heart has four chambers. The upper two chambers are the atria, and the lower two are the ventricles (see [figure](#)). Blood is pumped through the chambers, aided by four heart valves. The valves open and close so that blood flows in only one direction.

The four heart valves are (1) the tricuspid valve, separating the right atrium and right ventricle; (2) the pulmonary (pulmonic) valve, between the right ventricle and the pulmonary artery; (3) the mitral valve, between the left atrium and left ventricle; and (4) the aortic valve, between the left ventricle and the aorta. Each valve is made up of a set of "flaps", also called leaflets or cusps. The mitral valve normally has two flaps, while the others have three.

Blood low in oxygen (illustrated in gray) flows back to the heart after circulating through the body. It returns to the heart through veins and enters the right atrium. This chamber empties blood through the tricuspid valve to the right ventricle. The right ventricle pumps blood through the pulmonary valve into the pulmonary artery. From there the blood goes to the lungs where it gets fresh oxygen (illustrated in red). Blood returns in the pulmonary veins to the left atrium and then passes through the mitral valve into the left ventricle. The left ventricle pumps the red oxygen-rich blood out through the aortic valve into the aorta. Blood then moves through the aorta into the rest of the body.



*Modified from "If Your Child Has a Congenital Heart Defect" by the American Heart Association.



Disclaimer: The information provided here is intended to educate the reader about certain medical conditions and certain possible treatment. It is not a substitute for examination, diagnosis, and medical care provided by a licensed and qualified health professional. If you believe you, your child, or someone you know, suffer from the conditions described herein, please see your health care provider immediately. Do not attempt to treat yourself, your child or anyone else without proper medical supervision.

©2003 Pediatric Cardiology Medical Group - East Bay, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

Web Site by InterDoctor.com