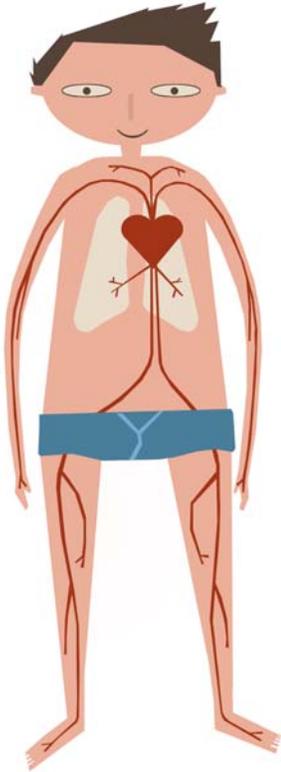


How My Heart Works



Your heart

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

It's working all the time, 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, then your heart rate will be slower. If you are running around and playing or if you get excited, then your heart rate will be faster.

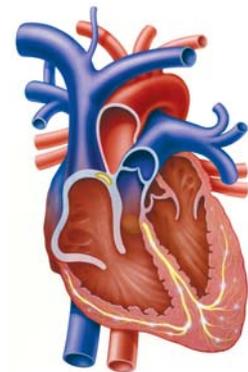
How your heart works

Your heart is a muscle that 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, called the atria (ay-tree-ah), and two in the bottom half, they're called the ventricles (ven-tri-culls).

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 oxygen from the air. Then the left side of the heart pumps this blood all around the body, brain and muscles so they can use the oxygen it carries. The blood then goes back to the right side of the heart to do this all over again.



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STARS

Syncope Trust And Reflex anoxic Seizures

STARS
P.O Box 5507
Hilton Head Island
SC 29938
001 (843) 785 4101
info@stars-us.org
www.stars-us.org

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-ah) 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 get a fluttering feeling or you might feel some pain in your chest. These feelings aren't very nice, but there are ways to make you feel better.



Fix it

If someone has an arrhythmia then they need to go to the doctor, so they can find out what kind of arrhythmia it is. Some arrhythmias don't need any treatments, but in some cases medicines can help, or special heart machines or devices might be suggested that will make you feel much better.

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



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