

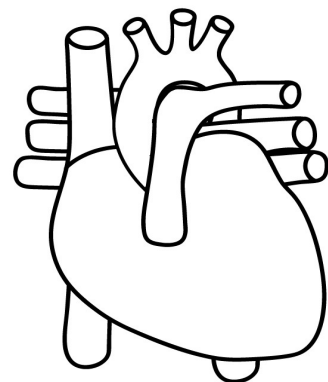
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Your Heart

by Cynthia Sherwood

Have you ever watched as your mom or dad pumps gas into your car? You may not realize it, but the most vital part of your body—your heart—is simply a fancy pump. It is designed to move your blood around your body. The heart is located a little to the left of the center of your chest and is about the size of your fist.



Your heart works very hard. When you run around a lot, you can feel your heart beating fast because it is pushing blood filled with oxygen and nutrients to the cells in your body. Your heart is a muscle too! It is divided into two parts. The right side receives blood from your body and pumps it into your lungs. The left side receives blood from the lungs and returns it to the rest of the body.

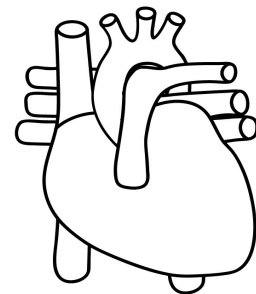
Your heart muscle beats between 80 and 120 times every minute. With each beat, blood is both entering and leaving your heart. The vessels that carry blood away from your heart are called arteries. The vessels that carry blood back to your heart are called veins.

Heart disease is common among older Americans because the heart can become clogged over time. The heart will not pump as well if someone smokes or eats a lot of unhealthy fats and sugary foods. To take good care of your heart, you should eat plenty of whole grains, fruits, vegetables, and lean proteins. You should also exercise often to get your heart pumping hard. Just like other muscles in your body, your heart needs exercise to keep strong.

If you wonder why it is so important to have a strong heart, just think about this—your heart will beat about three *billion* times in your lifetime!

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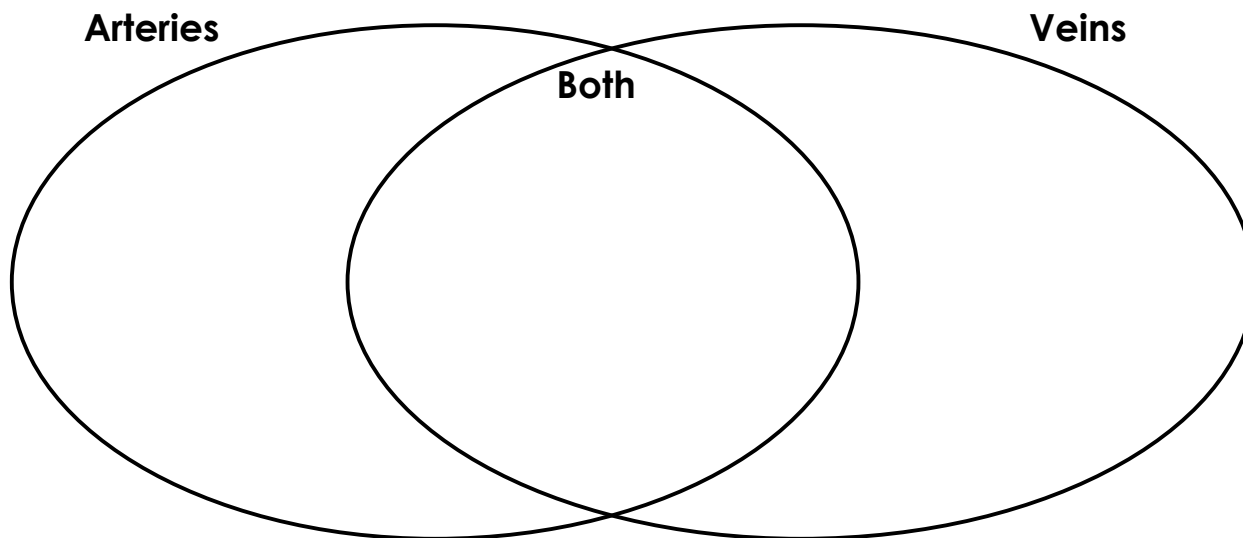
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1. Where is your heart located?

2. What does your heart do for your body?

3. How is the left side of your heart different from the right side?

4. Complete the Venn diagram to compare and contrast the functions of arteries and veins.



5. What are some things you can do to keep your heart healthy?
