

Talking to your heart child and siblings about their hearts



Children'sSM
Healthcare of Atlanta
Dedicated to All Better

What is the Heart's Job

Easy, child-friendly facts when explaining the job of the heart

- My heart is the size of my fist – it grows with me!
- The main job of the heart is to pump blood through the body
 - Once the body uses the oxygen it sends the blood back to the heart - that's the **BLUE** blood
 - The heart pumps blood to the lungs to get more oxygen to send back out to the body – that's the **RED** blood
- The heart is made up of 4 main rooms called chambers
- My heart has 4 little doors called valves that keep the blood flowing **ONE WAY**





The Children's Heart Institute
HASAN ABDALLAH, M.D., FAAP, FAAC

www.childrenheartinstitute.org

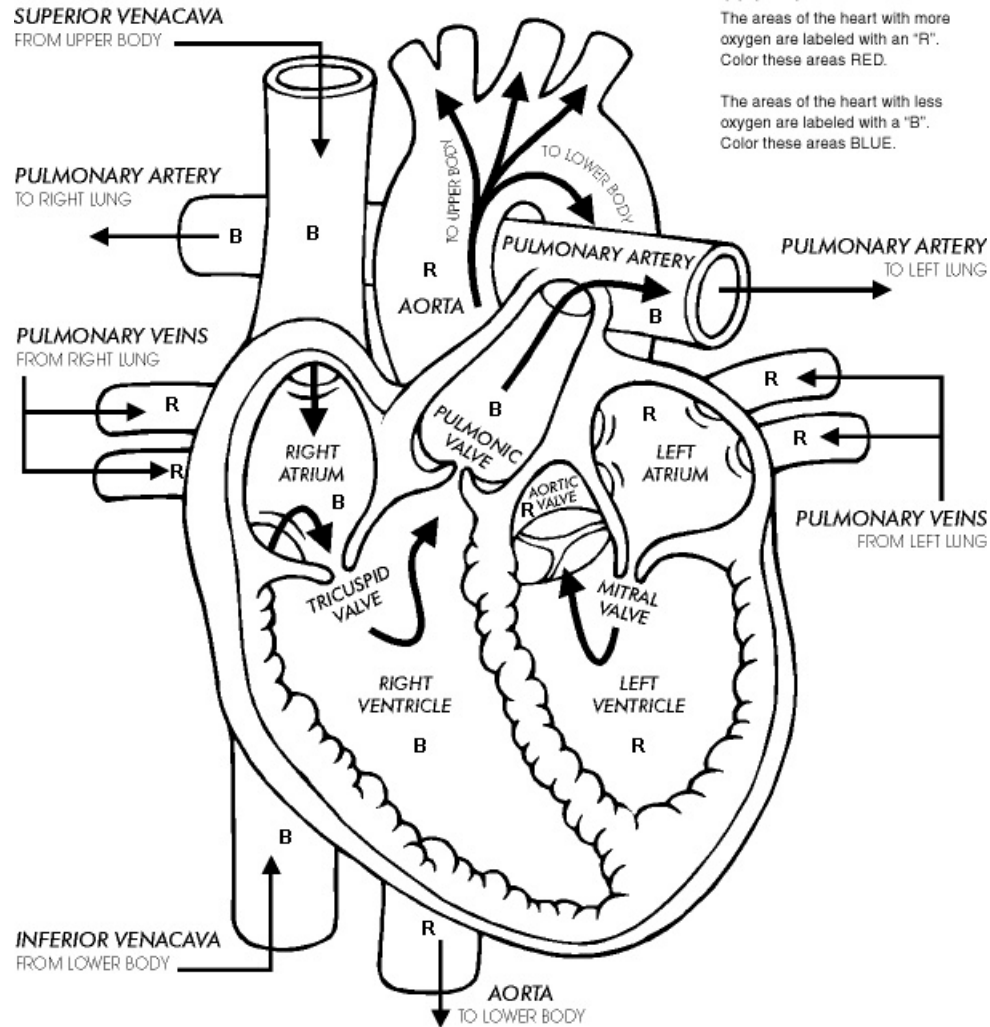
The Heart

This drawing shows how blood flows through the heart.

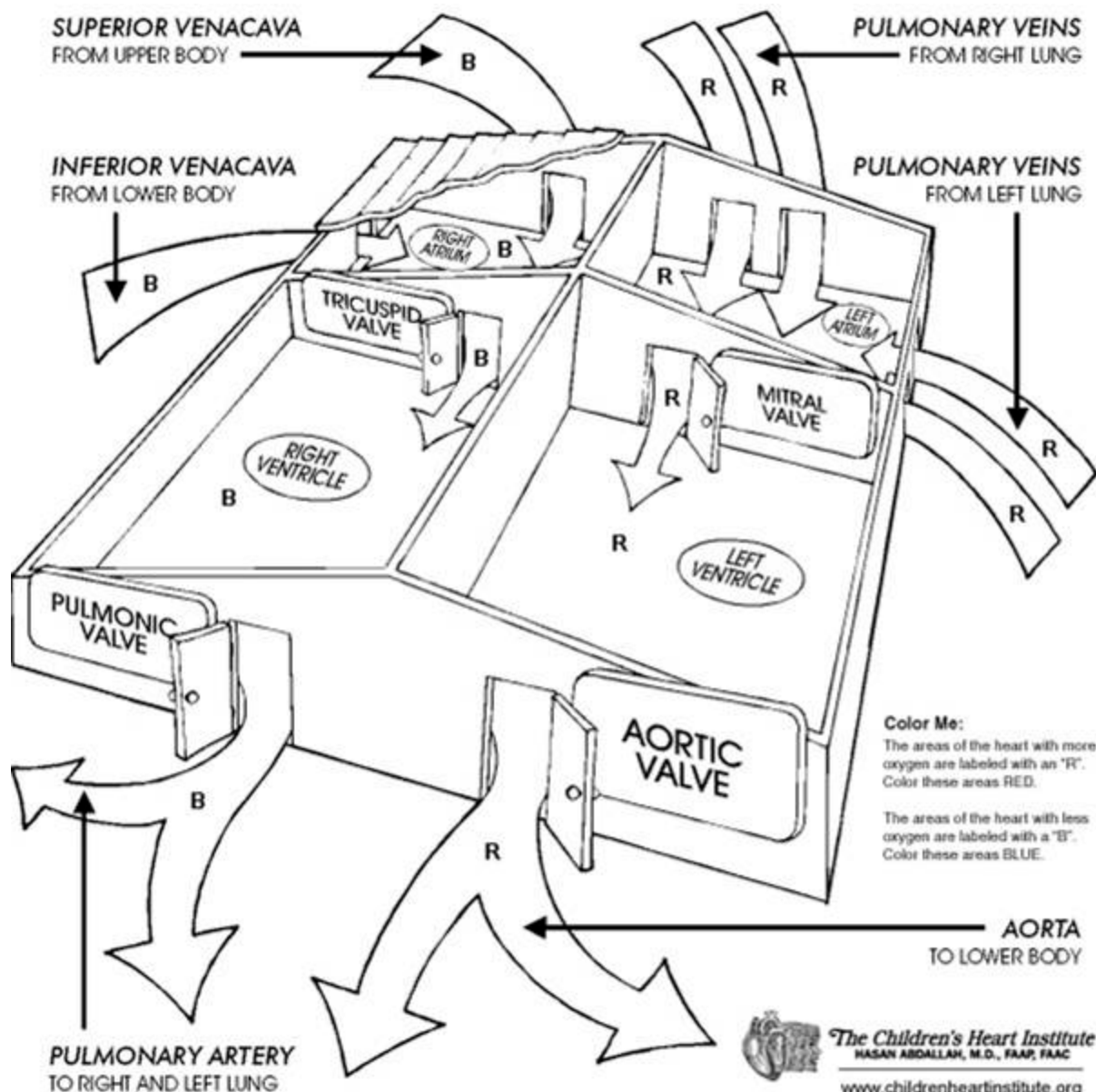
Color Me:

The areas of the heart with more oxygen are labeled with an "R".
Color these areas RED.

The areas of the heart with less oxygen are labeled with a "B".
Color these areas BLUE.



The Heart House



The heart has:
4 ROOMS (Chambers)
4 DOORS (Valves)
4 BIG HALLWAYS (Vessels)
4 SMALL HALLWAYS (Vessels)

THE ROOMS (Chambers)

The heart has **2 small rooms**:
 The Right Atrium is the room to the right.
 The Left Atrium is the room to the left.

The blood coming back from the body enters the right atrium.
 The blood coming back from the lungs enters the left atrium.

The heart has **2 large rooms**:
 The Right Ventricle is the room to the right.
 The Left Ventricle is the room to the left.

The Right Ventricle pumps blood to the lungs, so the blood can get oxygen.
 The Left Ventricle pumps blood with the oxygen to the whole body.

THE DOORS (Valves)

All of the heart's 4 doors only open one way.

The Tricuspid Valve is the door between the Right Atrium and Right Ventricle.

The Pulmonic Valve is the door between the Right Ventricle and Pulmonary Artery.

The Mitral Valve is the door between the Left Atrium and Left Ventricle.

The Aortic Valve is the door between the Left Ventricle and the Aorta.

THE HALLWAYS (Vessels)

There are **2 big and 4 small entering hallways**:
 The Superior Venacava is the big hallway that brings blood back from the head and top part of the body.

The Inferior Venacava is the big hallway that brings blood back from the lower part of the body.

The 4 Pulmonary Veins are the smaller hallways that collect blood from the lungs and send it to the Left Atrium.

There are 2 big exiting hallways:

The Aorta sends blood to the whole body.
 The Pulmonary Artery sends blood to the lungs.

Color Me:

The areas of the heart with more oxygen are labeled with an "R".
 Color these areas RED.

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 Color these areas BLUE.



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How to Talk about CHD

- Congenital Heart Defect = A problem with your heart when you were born
- We don't know why it happens
- You can't catch it or give it to someone else
- Nobody's fault



How to Talk about CHD

- Answer child honestly if she asks about her scars/medications
- Start the conversation by asking her if she knows why she has those scars, or takes those medications, or goes to see extra doctors
- Use Beads of Courage, scrapbooks, photos to help tell the story
- Use your resources! Talk with clinic team during your appointments and look for transition worksheets in the waiting areas!



I like me!

Kindergarten to third grade

My heart doctor's (Cardiologist, karh-dee-ol-uh-jist) name is _____.

When I am sick or hurt, I go to _____ hospital.

I come to visit my heart doctor because _____.

I am allergic to _____.

I am really good at _____.

I am great at taking medicine.

I take my medicine in the: Morning Afternoon Bedtime

One of my medicines is _____.

When I grow up, I want to be a _____.



All about me!

Fourth or fifth grade

My name is _____ and I am _____ years old. If you know me, then you know that I am great at _____. You might not know when you meet me, but I also have a heart condition called _____.

That means my heart works differently than most people. I take care of my heart in three ways:

- _____
- _____
- _____

I take _____ medicines.
My medicines are called:

- _____
- _____
- _____

I get fun exercise by playing my favorite outside games.

My favorite games are:

- _____

I eat healthy foods. My favorites are:

- _____

I am allergic to _____.

My biggest question for my cardiologist is _____.

The most important thing I want my cardiologist to know about me is _____.



Helping Kids Cope

- Spend quality, **individual time** with each child
- Try to keep a normal **routine**
- **Communicate** with your child's school and parents of other children as appropriate
- **Share information** with your children according to how much she/he wants to know
- **Ask questions.** Find out if your child is treated differently by friends, neighbors, teachers. Help him learn to talk to others about your heart child.
- Help children **express feelings** or concerns – art, play, friends



Siblings

- Not their fault!
- Cannot “catch” heart defect from child with the defect
- Be specific about the heart problem, don’t just say, “the baby is sick/not feeling well”
- Explain purpose of medical equipment
- Reassure them his/her own heart is working well



Siblings

- Keep their routine as normal as possible
- Let siblings decide how much they want to be involved in caring for the heart child – also allow them time to just be a kid
- Acknowledge sacrifices siblings make
- Help siblings identify a summer camp or special hobby



Resources for Siblings

What About Me? When Brothers and Sisters Get Sick (Peterkin, 1992)

My Brother Needs An Operation (Jaworski, 1998)

A Place to Grow (Bloom, 2002)

Magnificent, Marvelous Me! - a workbook for siblings www.artwithheart.org

I Know I Made It Happen: A gentle book about feelings (Blackburn, 1990)

The Invisible String (Patrice Karst, 2000) a story about separation

*Talk to a Child Life Specialist or a counselor for additional ideas



Cardiac Specific Resources

- Kid-friendly information about the heart
www.childrensheartinstitute.org & <http://kidshealth.org>
- *The Heart: The Questions and Answers Book for Kids* By [J. Willis Hurst](#) and J. Willis Hurst (elementary, middle school)
- Talk to a Child Life Specialist or a counselor for additional ideas



General Medical Resources

Franklin Goes to the Hospital By S. Jennings. (preschool, elementary)
Franklin the Turtle has to go to the hospital for an operation because he cracked his shell. The book explains the hospital procedure well and addresses the fears children have about the doctor and hospitals.

Pooh Plays Doctor By K.W. Zoehfeld.. (toddlers and preschoolers)
Good simple intro to common items.

Going to the Hospital...What Will I See? And Who are Those People Wearing Funny Clothes? By Wood, J.R. (2009).
Helps to familiarize children and their families with the initial procedures when hospitalized.



General Medical Resources

Rita Goes to the Hospital By Martine Davison. (preschool, elementary)
With the help of friendly staff members, Rita enjoys her visit to the hospital to have her tonsils taken out. Great explanation of what to expect.

It's Okay to Be Different (Parr, 2001)

