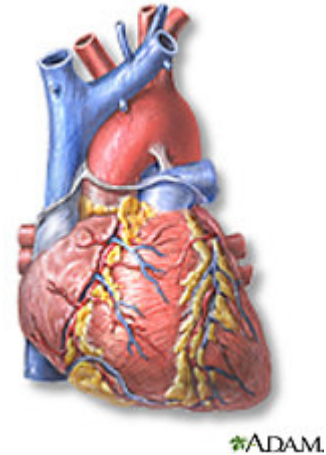


THE HEART



Interesting facts:

- Weighs about 12 ounces (340 g.)
- Approximately 6 inches long and 4 inches across (at widest point)
- Four-chambered pump, with two pumps, one to move blood to the lungs, the other to push blood out to the body
- **Daily**, enough blood will be pumped through approximately **60 000 miles** of blood vessels to fill a 4 000 gallon (**15 142 liters**) tank
- By age 47, the average person will have pumped approximately **300 000 tons** of blood
- The heart is the **strongest muscle** in the body (apart from the female uterus, however, the uterine muscle do not keep at it day and night for 70 years or more)
- The only rest the heart enjoys is a half second between beats, as well as less of a workload during sleep (unless the person experiences nightmares, because if you run for your life in a dream, your heart runs too)
- The heart skips beats from time to time – this is because the heart generates its own electricity, sending out impulses to trigger contraction; misfiring happens, piling one beat on top of another, this however, is nothing to worry about

Factors influencing the wellbeing of the heart and heart function:

- Coming from a **family with a history of heart disease** will increase your risk for heart related problems (nothing can be done regarding heredity, though, steps can be taken to reduce the risk)
- Being **overweight** – every pound (almost 0.5 kg) of excess fat contains something like 200 miles of capillaries which the

heart needs to push blood through (this is in addition to the work of carrying each extra pound)

- **Maintaining ideal blood pressure** – with a blood pressure reading of, for example, 140/90, the second figure, 90, is more important – this shows the rest the heart gets between beats, if this figure is too high, the heart will literally work itself to death
- **Smoking** – smoking constricts arteries which raises blood pressure, it is a stimulant which makes the heartbeat more rapid
- **Mindstate** – if you are too competitive, anxious, worry a lot, etc., the adrenal glands are stimulated continuously to produce adrenalin and noradrenalin which gives the same type of effect smoking would – tightened arteries, higher blood pressure, a faster heart rate

Things to do to help the heart:

- **Relax** – if you relax, your heart relaxes
- Occasional napping
- **Regular** (moderate) **exercise** (incorporating practical daily habits such as taking the steps instead of the escalator or elevator)
- **Diet** – become aware of what you eat, too much fatty foods will significantly increase your risk for heart related conditions (if you could see what happens inside the blood vessels after a heavy fatty meal: fat globules seem to glue red blood cells together into a sludgy mess which need to be pushed through capillaries and other blood vessels)

Adapted and taken from: “**I am Joe’s Body**”

By **J.D. Ratcliff**