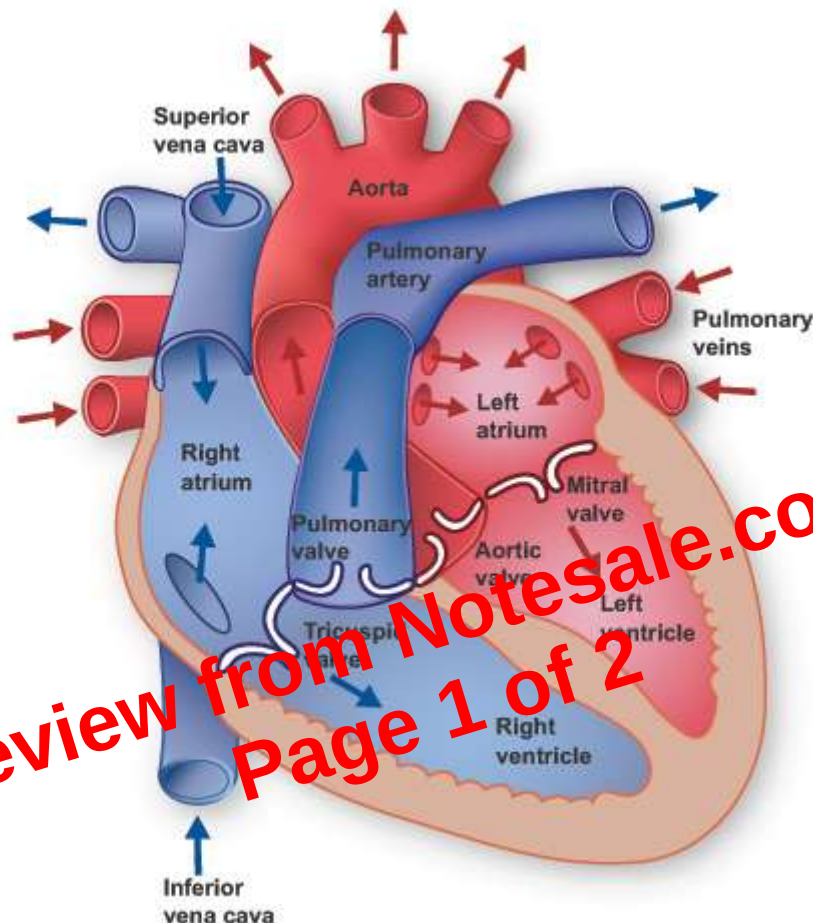


Heart Anatomy

The heart weighs between 7 and 15 ounces (200 to 425 grams) and is a little larger than the size of your fist. By the end of a long life, a person's heart may have beat (expanded and contracted) more than 3.5 billion times. In fact, each day, the average heart beats 100,000 times, pumping about 2,000 gallons (7,571 liters) of blood.



Your heart is located between your lungs in the middle of your chest, behind and slightly to the left of your breastbone (sternum). A double-layered membrane called the pericardium surrounds your heart like a sac. The outer layer of the pericardium surrounds the roots of your heart's major blood vessels and is attached by ligaments to your spinal column, diaphragm, and other parts of your body. The inner layer of the pericardium is attached to the heart muscle. A coating of fluid separates the two layers of membrane, letting the heart move as it beats.

Your heart has 4 chambers. The upper chambers are called the left and right atria, and the lower chambers are called the left and right ventricles. A wall of muscle called the septum separates the left and right atria and the left and right ventricles. The left ventricle is the largest and strongest chamber in your heart. The left ventricle's chamber walls are only about a half-inch thick, but they have enough force to push blood through the aortic valve and into your body.