



What Can I Do?

You should change any unhealthy habits (also called risk factors) that helped to create your heart problems in the first place.

Some risk factors are: smoking eating too much fat or salt, and not getting enough exercise.

Making changes to reduce risk factors can help keep your heart condition from getting worse and may even improve the health of your heart.

Remember

It is important to be your own best health advocate. A good way to do that is by committing to routine physical exams and diagnostic tests as often as is recommended by your cardiac specialist. Early detection of heart disease is important for effective treatment.

Contributing to the Community's Health

Frequently people inquire as to how they may make a contribution to the community's health. We encourage you to consider Glendale Adventist Medical Center's Healthcare Foundation whenever you or your family desire to make a difference in the health of our community. For more information, please call (818) 409-8055.

Physician Referral (818)409-8100

Diagnosing Your Problem

A procedure called cardiac catheterization can help your doctor identify the heart problem you have: coronary artery disease, heart valve disease, or heart muscle disease.

With the information obtained, your doctor can determine an appropriate treatment plan and course of action to take for your particular situation.

These can include:

- Diet and exercise
- Medication
- Coronary angioplasty
- Coronary atherectomy
- Coronary stent
- Pacemaker
- Bypass surgery
- Heart valve surgery



THE HEART AND
VASCULAR INSTITUTE
At Glendale Adventist Medical Center

10 Understanding How Your Heart Works



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Health

It is important for you to know as much as possible about how your heart functions in order to have a complete understanding of heart disease. This brochure describes the heart muscle and its chambers, valves and arteries.

Muscle

Your heart is a muscle that pumps blood throughout your body. Every time your heart beats it is pumping blood. To do its work, your heart needs a constant supply of oxygen-rich blood which it obtains from the lungs.

The heart pumps the oxygen-rich blood to provide nutrients, minerals, and oxygen needed for your body to work.

Chambers

The heart muscle is divided into four compartments or chambers, with two on the left side and two on the right side.

The upper chamber on each side is called an *atrium*. The atrium receives and collects blood. The lower chamber on each side is called a *ventricle*. The ventricles pump blood. The *right* ventricle pumps blood only to the lungs. The *left* ventricle is the main pumping chamber of the heart. It pumps blood to all parts of the body except the lungs.

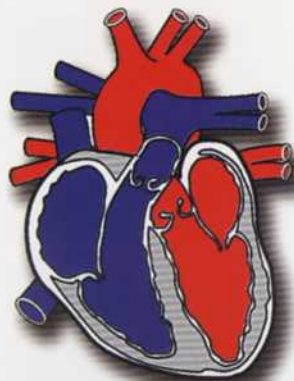
Valves

There are four valves that control the flow of blood inside the heart. They are like one-way doors to keep the blood moving in one direction. When the heart beats, the valves close to keep the blood from flowing backwards.

Chambers and Valves Work Together

Oxygen-poor blood that returns from the body collects in the right side of the heart (right atrium). It passes through the *tricuspid* valve into the *right ventricle* which pumps it through the *pulmonic valve* into the lungs where it picks up fresh oxygen.

Oxygen-rich blood coming from the lungs flows into the left side of the heart where it passes through the *mitral* valve into the *left ventricle*. It is then pumped through the *aortic valve* into the *aorta* (main artery) and all the other arteries. The aorta is the largest artery in the body.



Coronary Arteries

Coronary arteries are the blood vessels that wrap around the heart muscle and keep it supplied with oxygen-rich blood. When blood is pumped by the *left ventricle*, it is forced into the body's main artery, the *aorta*, located at the top of the heart.

Two coronary arteries, the *left main artery* and the *right coronary artery*, branch off the aorta.

The *left main artery* is about as wide as a drinking straw and less than an inch long. It branches into two narrower (smaller) arteries: the *left anterior descending*, which travels down the front side of the heart; and the *left circumflex*, which circles around the left side and then to the back of the heart.

The *right coronary artery* branches from the aorta, circles around the right side and then to the back of the heart.

Remember, these arteries are on the outside surface of the heart. They divide into smaller branches, similar to a tree, and lead deep into the heart muscle carrying the oxygen-rich blood to the cells.