

Summary sheet 1

How the heart works

What is the heart?

The heart is a muscle that pumps blood around the body. It's about the size of your fist and is in the middle of your chest and tilted slightly to the left.

How does a normal heart work?

The **right side** of the heart:

- receives blood from the body and pumps it to the lungs. The blood picks up fresh oxygen and releases carbon dioxide, and then flows back to the heart.

The **left side** of the heart:

- receives the oxygen-rich blood from the lungs, and pumps it out through the aorta to the rest of the body.

What does the heart do?

The **right side** and the **left side** of the heart work together, to circulate blood around your body.

Circulation of the blood is essential because:

- the blood takes nourishment to the body's tissues and organs, and
- sends waste materials to the lungs and kidneys, which then get rid of them from the body.

What is circulation?

Circulation is the movement of blood around the body, pumped by the heart. This system is called the cardiovascular system. It contains about five litres (eight pints) of blood, which your heart is continuously recirculating.

For more information

bhf.org.uk

BHF Heart Helpline: 0300 330 3311 – for information and support on anything related to heart health.

This service is available in English only. Phone lines open 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday, similar cost to 01 or 02 numbers.

BHF Orderline: 0870 600 6566 – to order our *free* BHF resources.