

# Your Circulatory System

The circulatory system is a lot like the plumbing in your house. Good clean water comes into the house from either a well or a city water supply. The water circulates through the house in the pipes and valves of the plumbing system, supplying the house's "organs"—your bathtub, sinks, clothes washer, and so on. Dirty water leaves these "organs" and goes through different pipes in the plumbing system out of the house and into the septic tank or city sewer. There the water is cleaned up and eventually makes it back into the ground where it will someday once again be picked up by a plumbing system.

Your blood—a little more than five quarts of it—circulates through your body's organs where its oxygen gets used and it picks up some waste products. The plumbing of your circulatory system leads back to the heart. When the blood arrives in the heart, it makes a quick trip to the lungs through the *pulmonary artery*, where the blood gets fresh oxygen and gets rid of some of the wastes. The cleaned-up blood goes back to a different area of the heart where it gets pumped out again to the rest of the body. And the process happens all over again.

Veins are the blood vessels that bring blood from the rest of the body into the heart. Arteries carry blood away from the heart and out to the body. The human body has thousands of miles of blood vessels!



**A model of the human heart**

We should be thankful that the heart is made up of incredibly strong muscles that work tirelessly all the time, day and night. It beats around three billion times in the average person's lifetime! All the more reason to eat good food, get plenty of exercise, and help your heart stay strong and healthy. ■