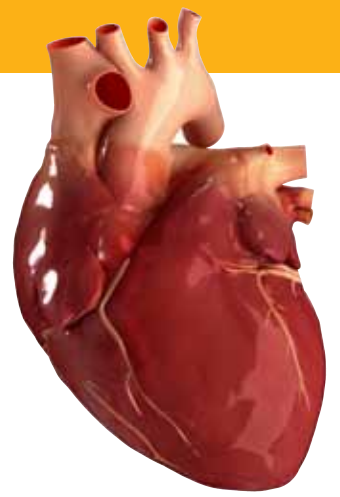


# Here's to Your Heart

It's February. This month you'll see hearts everywhere—valentine cards, paper hearts, candy hearts, cookie hearts, maybe even heart-shaped cakes.

But these pages are not about paper hearts or candy hearts or even valentines. They're all about your amazing heart.



## What Does Your Heart Look Like?

Hint: it's not shaped like a valentine. Since you can't actually see your own heart, you'll have to imagine what it looks like. You can find an image of a beating heart at [tinyurl.com/BeatingHeart1](http://tinyurl.com/BeatingHeart1).



ILLUSTRATION BY SCOTT HOLLADAY



## Directions, Please!

Your body has approximately 3,000,000,000,000 (three trillion) live cells. Each of those cells needs oxygen to live and work. Your blood brings that oxygen to your cells. It also takes away carbon dioxide, the gas left over from the cells' work. It's a bit like bringing in the meal and taking out the trash.

Your heart has to pump your blood to all the cells in your body. But your blood also has to make a special trip to your lungs to pick up oxygen. In order to do this well, your heart was created with two pumps: a left pump and a right pump.

**The right side of your heart** takes in all the "dirty" blood from your body and sends it to your lungs. Your lungs take out the carbon dioxide and put fresh oxygen into your blood.

**The left side of your heart** takes blood with fresh oxygen from your lungs and sends it to all the parts of your body. Your body cells pick up the oxygen and dump out the carbon dioxide.

After that, the cycle starts all over again: your blood goes to the heart, to the lungs, to the heart, to the body, to the heart, to the lungs—on and on, over and over again.

Even more amazing: this whole cycle happens every time your heart beats! How often is that? Read on!



## Healthy Heart Rates

Here's a list of common healthy heart rates (in beats per minute) from the Texas Heart Institute.

1. Newborn babies: 70-190
2. Infants to 1 year old: 80-160
3. Children 1-2 years old: 80-130
4. Children 3-4 years old: 80-120
5. Children 5-6 years old: 75-115
6. Children 7-9 years old: 70-110
7. Children 10 and older and adults: 60-100

## Straight from the Heart

The Bible speaks often about loving with your whole heart. Check out Matthew 22:37-39. These verses start with "Love the Lord your God..." Try to say the rest before you read the verses.

One of the most important verses in the Bible is about how God loves the world. It is John 3:16. Write it on the lines below. The first few words are given to get you started.

For God so loved \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## The Beat Goes On . . .

You can feel your own heartbeat—also called your "pulse." Try these two ways to take your pulse. But first, get a pencil and a watch or clock with a second hand. Are you ready?

### To find your pulse at your wrist:

Hold a hand out in front of you with your fingers and thumb pointing up. Slide the fingertips of your other hand gently and slowly along the inside of your upraised wrist. You should feel your pulse just below the fattest part of your thumb pad.

### To find your pulse at your neck:

Put three fingertips gently atop your Adam's apple. (That's the bump in your throat that goes up and down when you swallow.) Next, slide your fingers up to the top of your neck. Then move them to the left, off your throat, about halfway to the bottom of your ear. You should feel your pulse in the soft tissue there.

After you've found your pulse, count it. Using a watch or clock with a second hand, count the number of beats for one full minute.

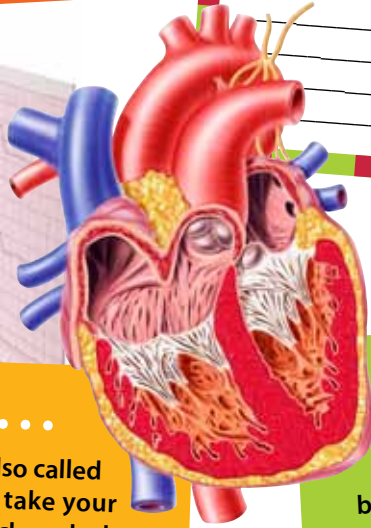
That's your heart rate.

Write your pulse rate here: \_\_\_\_\_ beats per minute.

Now do some jumping jacks or run in place for a full minute. Then take your pulse again.

Write the new rate here: \_\_\_\_\_ beats per minute.

Look at the chart above to see how you compare with other people's heart rates.



## Six Healthy Heart Tips

1. **Laugh a lot.** Health experts say that a good laugh relaxes your blood vessels and sends more blood throughout your body. Your blood brings everything each body cell needs, so your cells are "happier" when you laugh.
2. **Look at the bright side.** Got chores? Don't groan about it. Think of what a help you are. Studies show that a good attitude is good heart medicine.
3. **Walk a lot.** Walk or ride your bike whenever you can to exercise your heart. Run when you can for the same reason. Dance to keep your heart dancing.
4. **Brush and floss your teeth.** There is a direct link between a healthy mouth and a healthy heart.
5. **Get your ZZZZs.** For kids ages 7 to 12, most doctors recommend at least 11 to 12 hours of sleep each night. Getting enough sleep cuts your chances of developing heart problems later in life.
6. **Spend time with friends.** Laugh, cry, be silly, complain, explore, and just talk with other kids. People who connect with other people generally have happy hearts.



Joanne De Jonge is a freelance writer and a former U.S. National Park ranger. She attends West Valley Christian Fellowship in Phoenix, Ariz.