The Circulatory System

The circulatory system is in our body. The word 'circulatory' means something that is going round and round in a circle or loop. This is exactly what is happening in our bodies all the time.

What Circulates and Why?

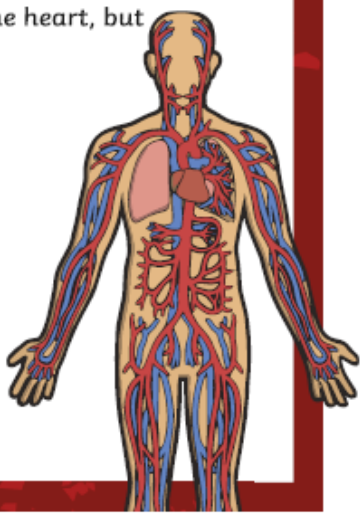
It is your blood that is circulated all around your body, and the blood is doing a really important job...it is taking oxygen all around your body to all the places it needs to go. The oxygen gets collected into your body when we breathe in, and it goes straight to your lungs. It's in the lungs that this oxygen goes into our blood and starts its journey around the body. You could think of the blood cells a bit like delivery drivers that drop off the oxygen to where it needs to be. Oxygen is dropped off all around the body to the capillaries, which are fine blood vessels that transfer the oxygen to all the cells in the body.

The Heart

Literally, the heart is at the heart of it all! Without the heart, no blood would get anywhere around your body. The heart is basically a big pump that constantly pumps the blood around the circulatory system. This happens all the time (even when you are asleep) to keep you alive. There are two loops in the circulatory system; the first goes to and from the heart visiting the lungs to collect oxygen and get rid of carbon dioxide. The other loop is much larger and goes to and from the heart, but travels all around the body in between.

Did you know?

- In the average person, the heart beats about 2,500,000,000 times during a lifetime.
- Amazingly, it only takes about 20 seconds for one red blood cell to go round the whole body.
- Red blood cells last about 4 months before your body makes new ones.

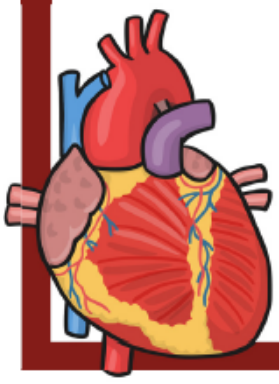


The Other Half of the System

We've talked about the blood in your system collecting oxygen and delivering it all around the body, but it also does another important job. It takes carbon dioxide from your body and back to the lungs to be let out when you breathe out. If we think of our red blood cell delivery drivers again, they also collect the waste and take it away again. So, they are delivery drivers and waste disposers all in one!

Did you know?

- If you put one adult's veins, capillaries and arteries in one long line it would stretch 60,000 miles which would circle the Earth two and a half times!



The Circulatory System Questions

1. Why is it called a 'circulatory system'?

2. What pumps the blood around your body?

3. How long does it take for one red blood cell to go round the body?

4. What is it that your body needs that gets delivered by the blood?

5. What is the final thing your body needs to do to get rid of unwanted carbon dioxide?

6. The larger loop of the circulatory system goes all around to and from your heart, where does the other one visit?

7. In the final paragraph, the author has used an apostrophe to create a contracted word. What should the full words be?

8. Find three conjunctions in the text.

9. What are the blood cells compared to? Why?

What is the most interesting piece of information you have read in this text and why?