

## About the Circulatory System

The heart and blood vessels are called the **circulatory system** because blood circulates through the body.

The heart is the important pump that makes it all work.

**When the heart pumps, the blood first flows** into tubes called **arteries**. The arteries that leave the heart are large tubes. The biggest one, called the **aorta**, is an inch wide. But the arteries soon branch again and again, to form many smaller tubes.

These **blood vessels** carry blood to all parts of the body.

The farther from the heart, the more blood vessels there are, and the smaller they are. The tiniest blood vessels, called **capillaries**, are so small you would need a microscope to see them.

Capillaries join to form larger blood vessels.

The bigger ones are called **veins**. These tubes carry blood back toward the **heart**. The closer to the heart, the fewer the veins there are, and the larger they are.

The largest veins empty blood into the heart. The body's **blood vessels** carry blood in a circle: moving away from the heart in **arteries**, traveling to various parts of the body in **capillaries**, and going back to the heart in **veins**.

