What Does The Heart Do? Lesson Idea Grades 3-5

Objective

- Explain the concept of circulation, i.e., blood is pumped through tubes (blood vessels) through the body and back to the heart.

Prepare

- Gather several pieces of flexible rubber tubing, each about 12 inches long, a dishpan of water and a measuring cup to use in simulating blood vessels and blood.
- Download and print the "What Am I?" story

Materials

- Chalk, “What Am I?” story, several 12-inch lengths of rubber tubing, dishpan, measuring cup, water (red food coloring can be added)

Explore

1. Read aloud the riddle at the beginning of the article "What Am I?" and confirm that the answer is “the heart.”
   - What did you learn about the heart in this article? (Answers will vary. Children may mention that the heart is a muscle that works all the time; it is a kind of pump; the heart beats faster after exercise.)
   - What does the heart pump? (Blood)
   - Where does the heart pump blood? (To every part of the body)

2. Draw a large figure 8 on the chalkboard or on chart paper. Put an X in the middle where the lines cross each other. Give children pieces of chalk or markers and let them take turns tracing the figure 8 beginning at the X in the middle. Children may also trace the figure 8 pattern on their own bodies.
   - Where did you start tracing the figure 8? (At the X)
   - Where did you finish tracing the figure 8? (At the X)
   - Point out that the heart is like the X on the figure 8. Trace the figure 8 again while explaining that blood goes from the heart to the lungs, back to the heart, from the heart to the body and back to the heart.
   - Expand the figure 8 to include a box labeled Heart in the middle, a box labeled Lungs at the top and a box labeled Body at the bottom. Then trace the path—Heart, Lungs, Heart, Body, Heart—several times and ask children to name the parts as you trace.
   - Explain that the heart, lungs and blood vessels are the main parts of the circulatory system and that the heart is the pump that pushes the blood through the system.

3. Display the dishpan filled with water, the measuring cup and the pieces of rubber tubing. Let children examine the tubes.
   - What do you notice about the inside of the tubes? (They are hollow.)
   - What do you think will happen to water if you put it in the tube? (It will run through.)
   - Let children take turns using the measuring cup to pour water through the tubes and into the dishpan. Explain that just like the water in the rubber tubes, blood goes to all parts of the body through tubes. These tubes, called blood vessels, are also part of the circulatory system.