

The Fontan Circulation

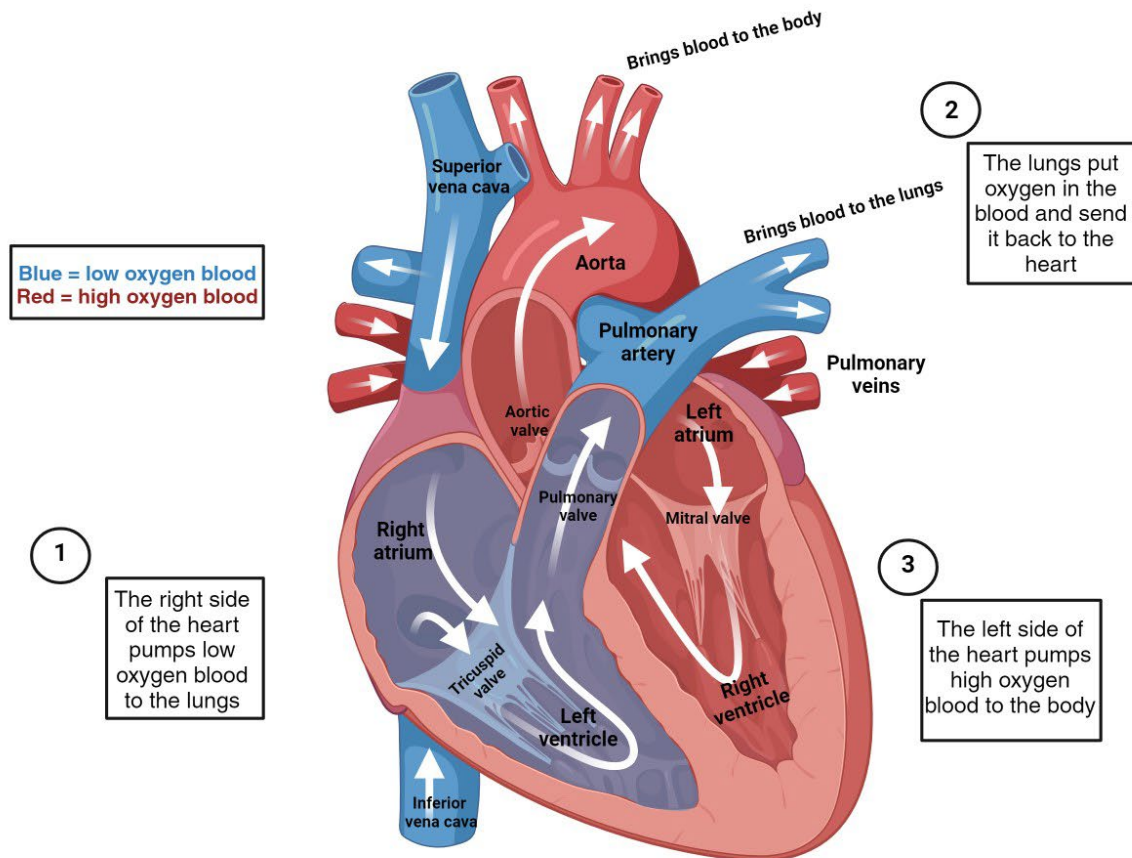
What is the Fontan surgery?

The Fontan procedure is a type of heart surgery for children born with certain heart problems. It is usually done when children are between 2 to 4 years old.

How does it work?

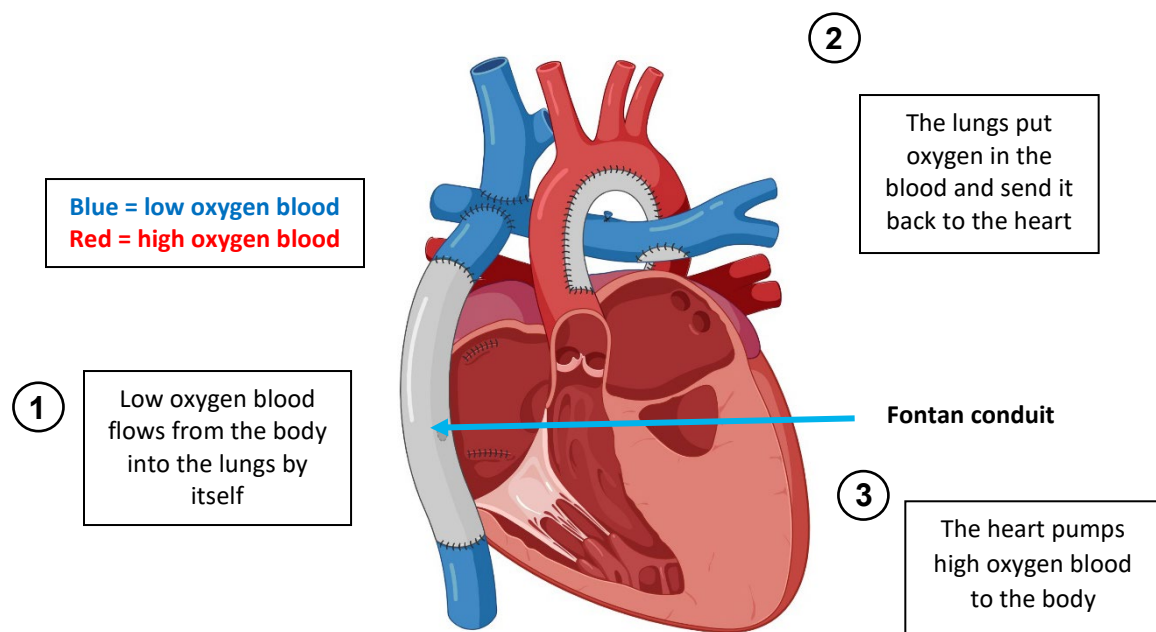
To understand how the Fontan works, it is important to know about how a normal heart works.

Normal Heart



How does the Fontan work?

Fontan



The Fontan surgery helps many different heart problems that usually cause low blood oxygen levels at birth. Some problems include:

- One pumping chamber is too small
- One or more heart valves are too small
- Some parts of the heart are connected in a way that can't be fixed

The Fontan procedure, and surgeries before it, connects the heart and lungs. This lowers the amount of work that the heart has to do to pump blood.

How are the Fontan circulation and normal heart different?

The Fontan circulation is different than a normal heart in a few ways:

- The heart does not pump blood to the lungs. Blood flows by itself into the lungs.
- The pumping chamber(s) and valves may not work as well as a normal heart.
- Pressure in the large veins in the chest are higher than normal.
- Blood oxygen levels can still be lower than normal in some patients.

Having Fontan circulation may mean the organs of the body might not get as much blood flow and oxygen as they need, so they may not work as well.

How does the Fontan affect the body?

If the heart or other organs don't work well it can affect how people feel.

Some people feel great for many years after the Fontan.

Other people may experience:

- Feeling tired often
- Feeling breathless with activities
- Not being able to exercise or play like other children/people
- Problems with eating (feeling nausea, vomiting, or having diarrhea)
- Having trouble in school
- Feeling anxious or depressed

How does someone with Fontan circulation stay healthy?

- Follow-up with your cardiologist at least once a year
- Take your medicines as instructed by your doctors
- Exercise at least 5 days per week (or every day if possible)
- Eat a healthy diet (limit sugar, fat, and alcohol)
- Follow-up with your primary care doctor at least once a year
- Get all recommended vaccinations including those for flu and COVID-19
- Avoid smoking, vaping, and other drug