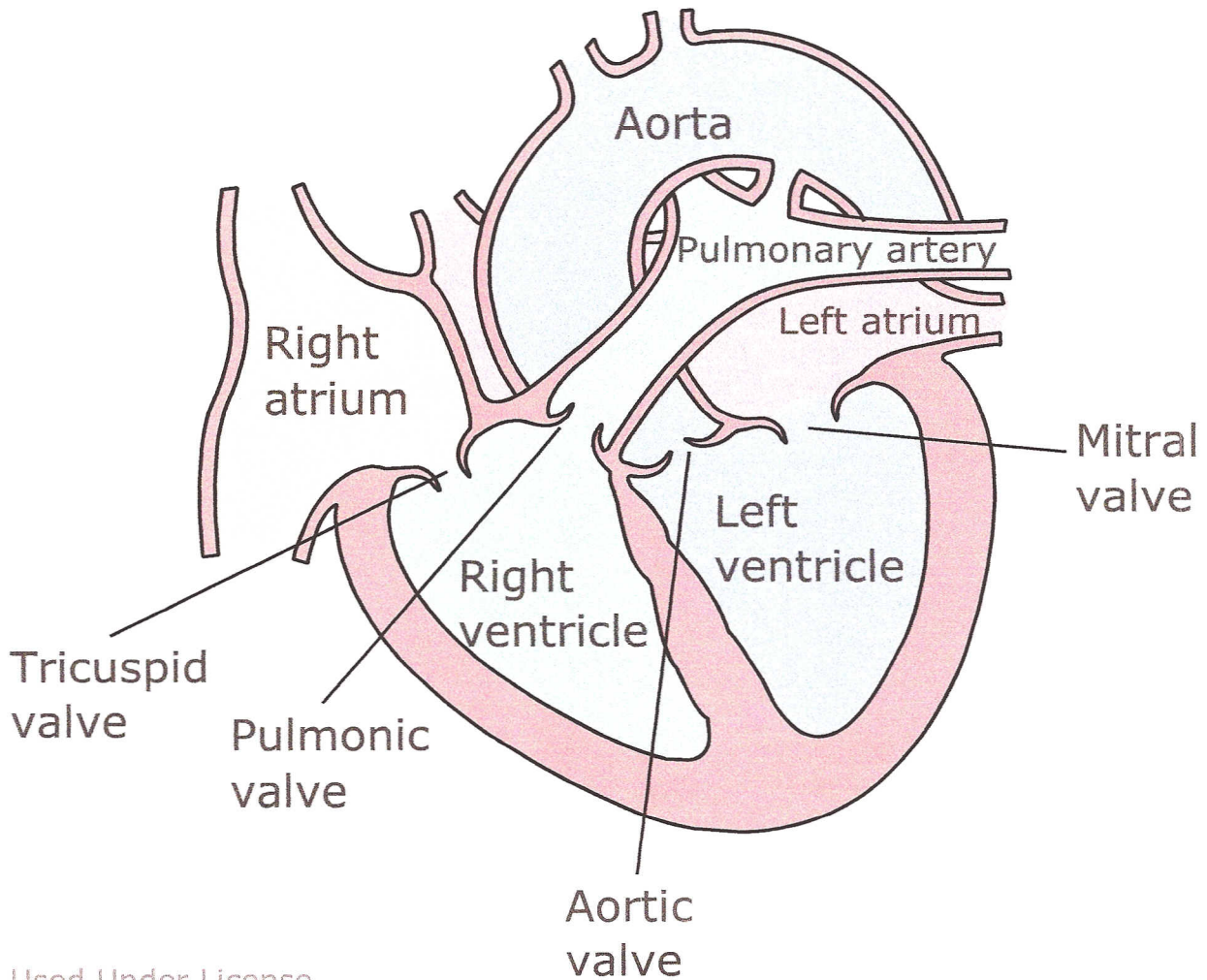


Valves: Normal heart function and general valve disease.



Used Under License  
Copyright© Lifelearn Inc.

The mammalian heart has 4 chambers and 4 valves that control blood flow into and out of the heart. After circulating through the body, blood enters the right side of the heart before being pumped into the lungs for oxygenation. From the lungs, oxygenated blood flows into the left side of the heart, where it is pumped into the arteries and circulates throughout the body. Valves open and close the different chambers of the heart to efficiently control blood flow. Abnormal valve function causes blood turbulence, that is detected as a heart murmur. In general there are two types of valve defect - in valvular stenosis, the valves are smaller and narrower; in valvular insufficiency, the valves are leaky. In both cases the pumping of the heart becomes inefficient, and the heart has to work harder to compensate. The end result is heart failure. Further details on specific diseases can be found in our Client Education Handout Series.