



Cardiac Glossary of Terms

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Aneurysm: A ballooning of the wall of a vein or an artery or the heart itself due to weakening of the wall by disease, traumatic injury or an abnormality present at birth.

Angiocardiology: A diagnostic method involving injection of a dye into the bloodstream. Chest x-rays taken after the injection show the inside dimensions of the heart and great vessel, as outlined by the dye.

Anoxia: Literally, no oxygen. This condition most frequently occurs when the oxygen supply to a part of the body is critically diminished. This may result in the death of the affected tissue.

Antiarrhythmic Drugs: Drugs that are used to treat disorders of the heart rate and rhythm, such as lidocaine, procaine amide, quinidine, digitalis, propranolol, atropine and isoproterenol.

Anticoagulant: A drug that delays clotting (coagulation) of the blood. When given in cases where a blood vessel has been plugged by a clot, an anticoagulant tends to prevent new clots from forming, or the existing clots from enlarging, but does not dissolve an existing clot. Anticoagulants are also used to prevent clots from forming on artificial material, such as artificial valves.

Aorta: The main artery to the body, originating from the base of the heart, arching up over the heart like a canoe handle, and passing down through the chest and abdomen near the spine. The aorta normally receives blood from the left ventricle of the heart and moves it to the many lesser arteries that conduct blood to all parts of the body, except the lungs.

Aortic Stenosis: A narrowing at the valve opening, or just above or below the valve, between the left ventricle of the heart and the large artery called the aorta.

Arrhythmia: Any variation from the normal rhythm of the heartbeat.

Arterial Blood: Blood that picks up oxygen in the lungs and normally passes from the lungs to the left side of the heart via the pulmonary veins. This blood is then pumped by the left side of the heart into the arteries that carry it to all parts of the body.

Artery: Any blood vessel that carries blood away from the heart to the various parts of the body. Arteries usually carry oxygenated blood, except for the pulmonary artery, which carries unoxygenated blood from the heart to the lungs, where it picks up oxygen.

Asymptomatic: Without symptoms. A person is considered asymptomatic when he does not exhibit functional evidence of a disease or condition.

Atresia: The absence of a normal opening.

Atrial Septal Defect: An opening in the wall, or septum, that normally divides the left and right upper heart chambers, called the atria.

Atrial Septum: Sometime called the interatrial septum, this is the muscular wall that divides the left and right upper chambers of the heart, call the atria.

Atrium: Sometimes referred to as the auricle. The atrium is one of the two upper chambers of the heart. The right atrium receives unoxygenated blood from the body. The left atrium receives oxygenated blood from the lungs.

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