

Listening to Your Heartbeat

Grades: Second–Fifth Grade

Materials: paper, markers, timer (optional)

Subject: Wellness checks, anatomy

Skills: Focused listening, making inferences, critical thinking, comparing and contrasting

Common Core:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.1.1.A

National Health Education Standards:

1.2.2 Identify benefits of practicing health-promoting behaviors.

1.2.6 List ways to engage in healthy practices and behaviors (e.g., exercise).

BACKGROUND

Women in Medicine / Las mujeres en la medicina begins by introducing readers to Dr. Helen Taussig, an influential pediatrician who worked with children whose hearts wouldn't pump enough blood to their lungs. Dr. Taussig listened to her patient's heartbeats to see if their hearts were healthy. Now, doctors always listen to our heartbeats during wellness checkups to make sure our hearts are pumping enough blood throughout our bodies. Before you start the activity with your students, ask them how many of them have had a doctor listen to their heartbeat.

ACTIVITY

1. Tell your students to spread out around the classroom and find a place where they are not too close to anyone else (at a table, fill every other chair). Give each student a sheet of paper and a marker, and have them each write their name on the paper.
2. Tell the students to place their right hand over their heart. Demonstrate if necessary. Make sure the students are very quiet, so each student has a chance to tell if they can feel and hear their own heartbeat. If they cannot, the students may move their hand around on their chest to find the heart.
3. Once every student has found their heartbeat, ask them to take the marker with their left hand.
4. When they are ready to begin, start a timer or count silently for 20 seconds. During this time, each student will make a tally mark on their paper every time they feel their heart beat.
5. After twenty seconds, tell the students to remove their hand from their heart and stand up. Time the students for ten more seconds and ask them to do as many jumping jacks as possible (or another preferred physical activity) during that time.
6. Immediately after this physical activity, ask the students to return to sitting, place their hands on their hearts, and record their heartbeats in the same fashion for twenty more seconds.
7. Call the students back together to discuss. They should bring their sheet of paper with them for the discussion.

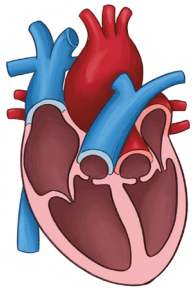


Listening to Your Heartbeat continued

DISCUSSION

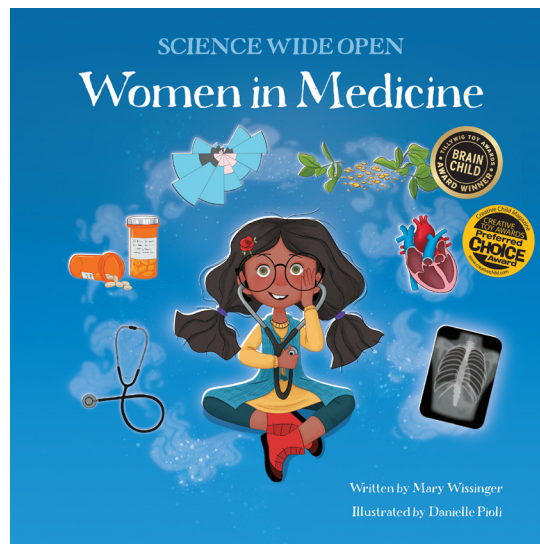
Ask the students to look at the marks on their paper. What does the pattern look like? Have them share with a partner and ask them to compare and contrast their heartbeat pattern with their partner's. What looks different? What looks the same?

Did their heartbeat slow down, speed up, or stay the same after doing jumping jacks (or another physical activity)? Ask what they think causes a heartbeat to speed up or slow down. Talk through the basic function of the heart (it's a muscle that pumps blood, which delivers oxygen throughout the body).



Doctors like Dr. Helen Taussig rely on hearing their patient's heartbeat to find out if their patient is healthy. Ask why it might be important to listen for a heartbeat. What can a heartbeat tell doctors about their patients?

Ask the students if they can think of a good way to help keep their hearts healthy, based on what they learned from the activity.



This activity was excerpted from the Teacher's Guide to
Women in Medicine / Las mujeres en la medicina

English editions:

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