

Medical Definition of Systole

REVIEWED

By Chris Tighe at 10:33 am, Oct 23, 2018

Systole: The time period when the heart is contracting. The period specifically during which the left ventricle of the heart contracts.

The final letter in "systole" is pronounced as a long "e" as in "lee." The adjective for systole is systolic.

The systolic pressure is specifically the maximum arterial pressure during contraction of the left ventricle of the heart.

In a blood pressure reading, the systolic pressure is typically the first number recorded. For example, with a blood pressure of 120/80 ("120 over 80"), the systolic pressure is 120. By "120" is meant 120 mm Hg (millimeters of mercury).

A systolic murmur is a heart murmur heard during systole, the time the heart contracts, between the normal first and second heart sounds.

"Systole" came without change from the Greek *systole* meaning "a drawing together or a contraction." The term has been in use since the 16th century to denote the contraction of the heart muscle.

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