

DIVING WITH A

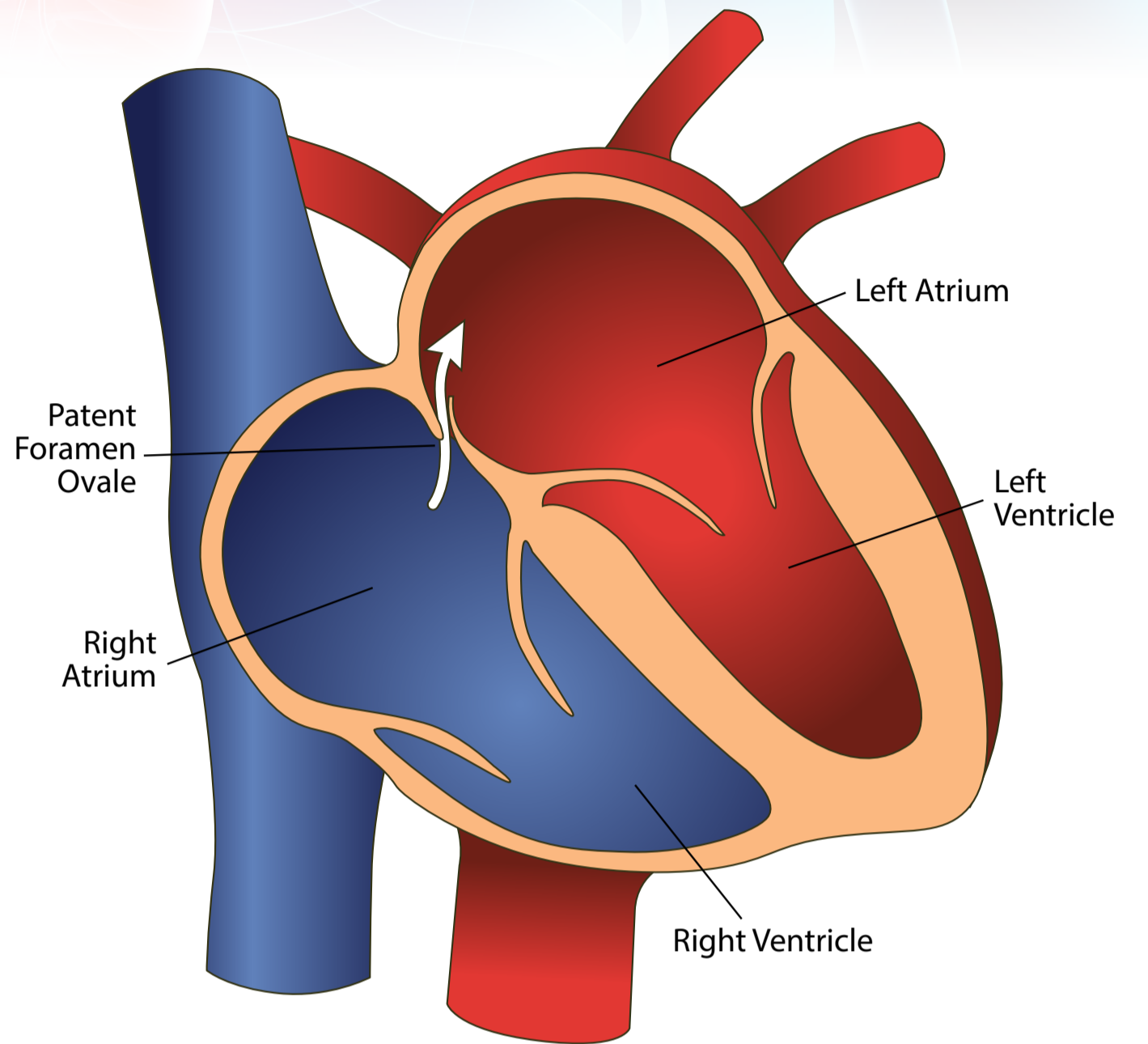
PATENT FORAMEN OVALE (PFO)

WHAT IS A PFO?

- It is a hole in the heart that failed to close properly after birth.
- A “trap door” which can open letting the blood flow into the left atrium and bypassing the pulmonary filter.

27% of people have PFO

6% of people have a large PFO



IMPACT ON DIVERS

A PFO may let Venous Gas Emboli (VGE) pass to the arterial side (shunt) and cause decompression illness.

2.5x Greater risk of developing DCI with PFO

With PFO

Without PFO

4x Greater risk of neurological DCI

With PFO

Without PFO

WHAT CAN DIVERS WITH A PFO DO?



Stop diving



Dive more conservatively

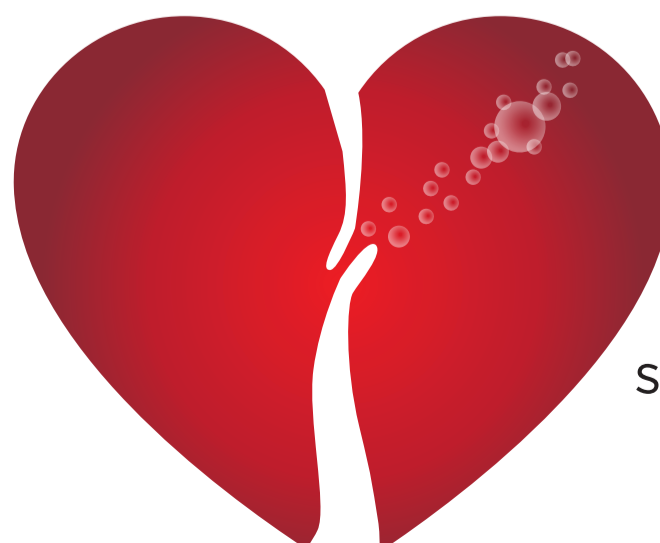


Close the PFO

PFO BECOMES A DCI RISK WHEN:

A PFO is large

Valsalva-like maneuver opens PFO



VGE overload

Target tissue saturated with gas