



CHD Fact Sheet

What is congenital heart disease?

Congenital means present at birth. Congenital heart disease (CHD) means a heart condition that a baby is born with. These conditions can affect the heart's structure, how it works, or both.

There are about 35 types of known congenital heart defects. A number of these occur in combination. Little is known about the cause of most congenital heart defects. The amazing progress over the past 50 years in diagnosis, surgery, and other interventions has vastly improved survival.

How common is congenital heart disease?

Congenital heart defects are the most common birth defect. Each year, about 1 out of every 100 babies born has a heart defect. More than half of all babies born with CHD will require surgery in order to survive; 21% of children requiring cardiac surgery are under 1 month old, and 40% of children requiring cardiac surgery are under 1 year old.

How is congenital heart disease diagnosed?

CHDs can be discovered during pregnancy, after birth, or in adulthood. Early detection is of critical importance and can increase survival rates. During a pregnant woman's 20-week anatomy scan, doctors are sometimes able to detect a CHD.

If you are pregnant, ask your doctor these important questions:

- Is the heart rate normal?
- Do you look at the arteries?
- Are the heart and stomach in the correct position?
- Is the heart function normal?
- Do you see four chambers?

Tests used to diagnose CHD after a baby has been born include:

- Pulse oximetry screening in newborns
- Cardiac catheterization
- Chest X-ray
- Echocardiogram
- Electrocardiogram (ECG or EKG)
- Magnetic resonance imaging
- (Cardiac CT)

What are some symptoms of congenital heart disease?

Some symptoms of CHD include:

- A heart murmur
- Fast breathing
- Shortness of breath
- Poor feeding, especially in infants
- Poor weight gain in infants
- Fatigue during exercise or activity

If your child has been diagnosed with a CHD, please make sure you take your child to all their scheduled doctors' visits.