

What is the treatment for congenital heart defects?

There are some heart defects that do not require any treatment, and will not effect your child's long term health. However, there are other heart defects that are serious and require immediate treatment. Your baby's doctor will let you know if any type of treatment is necessary.

Types of treatment for congenital heart defects

- **Observation** - For those that do not require treatment.
- **Medications** - The not-so-serious heart defects can be treated with medications to improve the hearts' ability to pump and work.
- **Procedure** - Catherization is a procedure in which a catheter (thin tube) is used to repair the congenital heart defect without the use of surgery.
- **Surgery** - There are some heart conditions that require open heart surgery.
- **Heart Transplant** - For some heart conditions, the heart cannot be repaired through surgical options and a heart transplant is needed.



Resources and Support Services

The Office for Genetics and People with Special Health Care Needs, of the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, is dedicated in providing resources and support services to Maryland families.

- Office for Genetics and People with Special Health Care Needs
<http://fha.dhmh.maryland.gov/genetics/SitePages/home>
1-800-638-8864
- Congenital Heart Disease Information Network
www.tchin.org
1-609-822-1572
- Little Hearts Parental and Child Support Groups
<http://www.littlehearts.org>
- March of Dimes
www.marchofdimes.com
410-546-2241
- The Parents' Place Of Maryland
www.ppmd.org
410-768-9100



Martin O. Malley, Governor
Anthony G. Brown, Lieutenant Governor
Joshua M. Sharfstein, M.D., Secretary

Congenital Heart Defects

Parent Information



Office for Genetics and People
with
Special Health Care Needs

Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
Prevention and Health Promotion
Administration
201 West Preston Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21201
Toll-free: 1-800-638-8864

What is a Congenital Heart Defect ?

- The word *congenital* means present at birth.
- It is the most common type of birth defect.
- The baby's heart forms in the very early stages of pregnancy and heart abnormalities or incomplete development of the heart occur when the baby's heart is forming.

What causes Congenital Heart Defects ?

The causes of Congenital Heart Defects are unknown, however, certain environmental and genetic risk factors may play a role in your baby developing a congenital heart defect.

They *include*:

- **Heredity** - Congenital heart defects may run in families and they can be associated with many types of genetic syndromes or chromosomal abnormalities such as Down Syndrome. During fetal development, genetic testing can be done to detect some abnormalities.
- **Medications** - Taking certain medications while pregnant can increase the risk of your baby being born with a heart defect. You should talk to your doctor about *all* of the medications you are currently taking.
- **Diabetes** - Is a chronic illness which may interfere with normal heart development. You can reduce your risk by making certain that you see your provider regularly and control your blood sugars before becoming pregnant.
- **Viral Infections** - Contracting a certain viral infection during the first trimester such as Rubella (German Measles) can cause a congenital heart defect.

What are the types of congenital heart defects?

Acyanotic - oxygenated blood flows from the left side of the heart to the right side of the heart, and then to the lungs.

Acyanotic Defects:

- Patent Ductus Arteriosus-There is an opening between the pulmonary artery and the aorta.
- Pulmonary Valve Stenosis-There is a narrowing of the valve between the right ventricle and the pulmonary artery.
- Aortic Valve Stenosis-There is a narrowing of the valve between the left ventricle and the aorta.
- Coarctation of the Aorta-There is a narrowing in part of the aorta that supplies blood to the entire body.

Cyanotic - Blood that does not contain oxygen flows to all organs in the body

Cyanotic Defects:

- Tetralogy of Fallot-Defect in the hearts' structure that is present at birth.

What are the signs and symptoms of congenital heart defects?

- Pale or bluish skin color
- Delayed growth and development
- Poor feeding
- Failure to gain weight
- Fast breathing
- Shortness of breath
- Lethargy (tiredness)



How do you diagnose congenital heart defects?

Listening - Your baby's doctor may hear an abnormal sound in the heart beat. At this point, your baby's doctor may order tests to confirm whether your baby has a heart defect:

- Chest x-ray - A painless test that shows a picture of your baby's heart, lungs, airway, blood vessels and lymph nodes.
- Electrocardiogram - A painless test that records heart rate activity.
- Echocardiogram - A painless test that uses sound waves (ultrasound) to create images/pictures of the heart.

Pulse Oximetry Screening-

A low oxygen level can indicate that your baby may have a congenital heart defect. A painless device is placed on the baby's hand or foot to measure the level of oxygen saturation in the baby's blood and pulse rate.

When is the screening performed?

The screening is performed in the nursery within 24-48 hours after birth.

What happens if the screening is abnormal?

Your baby's doctor will order additional tests to confirm the diagnosis, and send your child to a pediatric cardiologist (pediatric heart doctor).