What is a congenital heart defect?

The word “congenital” means existing at birth. A defect occurs when the heart or blood vessels near the heart do not develop normally before birth.

We do not know what causes most congenital heart defects.

What tests will my child need?

As well as blood tests, your child may need these tests to help diagnose a congenital heart defect.

Chest x-ray
A chest x-ray gives us information about your child’s lungs, and the size and shape of your child’s heart.

Electrocardiogram or ECG
An ECG records the electrical activity of your child’s heart as it beats.

Echocardiogram
An ‘echo’ shows the structure and function of your child’s heart. Your child may be given a sedative. We will discuss this with you if it is needed.

24 hour Holter Monitor test
In this test, a machine records the electrical activity of your child’s heart over 24 hours.
Who will care for my child?

You will work closely with these members of the health care team to determine your child’s needs and plan of care.

**Pediatric Cardiologist**
A doctor with special training and experience in diagnosing and treating heart problems in children.

**Nurse Practitioner**
A nurse with additional education and responsibilities in the care of children with heart problems.

**Registered Nurse (RN)**
A nurse with experience in caring for children with heart problems.

**Learners**
McMaster Children’s Hospital is a teaching hospital. We provide training for doctors, nurses and other health professionals. Each student works under the close supervision of a fully trained health professional.

You and your family are an important part of the team.

We will give you information, help and support as we care for your child.

We welcome your questions.

How can I learn more about my child?

The health care team will meet with you and explain your child’s condition and care.

You may also wish to explore the Hospital for Sick Children’s website: www.aboutkidshealth.ca
What happens next?

What happens next depends on your child’s condition. The team will discuss your child’s plan of care with you.

• If your child needs to have corrective surgery or a procedure right away, your child may be transferred to the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto.

• If your child’s condition is stable, your child will have follow-up care. Some children may need surgery or a procedure at a later time.

• Your child may need to take antibiotics before surgery or dental procedures to prevent an infection that could affect his or her heart.

Notes

If you have any questions or concerns, please call the Pediatric Cardiology Clinic at 905-521-2100, ext. 75562.

For information about clinic appointments, call ext. 73974.