

# Congenital heart defects

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Information for parents  
from the 2G Pediatric Cardiology Clinic

## **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.

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## **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](http://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

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**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.**