

Congenital heart defects

Information for parents in the Neonatal Nurseries

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.

Congenital heart defects are not necessarily inherited (passed from parent to child). They often occur for unknown reasons during the development of the fetus.

Did you know?

1 out of 100 babies has some kind of congenital heart disease

What causes congenital heart defects?

We do not know what causes most congenital heart defects. Please do not feel that it is your fault for having a baby with this problem.

What tests will my baby need?

There are several tests that your baby may have done to help the doctor diagnose a congenital heart defect. Your baby's doctor will discuss the tests that are recommended for your baby. Most tests are not painful for your baby.

Chest X-ray

- A chest x-ray gives the doctor information about your baby's lungs, and the size and shape of your baby's heart.

Electrocardiogram (ECG)

- An ECG records the electrical activity of your baby's heart as it beats.
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Echocardiogram

- An 'echo' lets the doctor see the structure and function of your baby's heart. This test uses sound waves to create a video of the inside of the heart as it beats.
- A Doppler test (ultrasound) with the echocardiogram can measure the flow of blood.
- Your baby may be given a sedative for this test. The doctor 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 baby's heart over 24 hours.

Who will care for my baby?

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

Team member	How they help your baby
Pediatric Cardiologist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A doctor with special training and experience in diagnosing and treating heart problems in children.
Nurse Practitioner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A nurse with additional education and skills in the care of children with heart problems and their families.
Registered Nurse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registered nurses with experience in caring for children with heart problems.
Learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 this team. We will give you information, help and support as we care for your baby. We welcome your questions.

How can I learn more about my baby?

We want to help you learn about your baby's condition. When a diagnosis has been made, the Cardiologist and other members of the heart care team will meet with you and explain your baby's condition and care. Your baby's nurse will give you more information that relates to your baby's needs.



**You may also wish to explore the
Hospital for Sick Children's website:**

www.aboutkidshealth.ca

What happens next?

What happens next will depend on your baby's condition. Your baby's heart care team will review the plan of care for your baby with you.

- If your baby needs to have corrective surgery or other procedures right away, the Neonatal Transport Team will transfer your baby to the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto.
- If your baby's condition is stable, your baby may need follow-up care. We will make sure all teaching, appointments and special instructions have been given to you before your baby leaves the Neonatal Nursery.

**If you have any questions or concerns, please call the
Cardiology Clinic at 905-521-2100, ext. 73974.**

