

Congestive heart failure

What is congestive heart failure?

Congestive heart failure, or CHF, is a condition in which the heart does not pump as well as it should. This condition can lead to 2 types of problems, depending on which side of the heart is affected.

- The **right side** of the heart receives blood from the body's veins. If this side is not pumping well, blood returning to the heart backs up into the veins. When this happens fluid collects in the body's tissues. In your child, you may see this fluid as swelling or puffiness around the eyes, hands, feet and abdomen.
- The **left side** of the heart receives blood from the lungs. When the left side is not pumping well, blood backs up into the veins of the lungs. If this happens you may notice that your child's breathing becomes noisy, difficult and faster.

What causes congestive heart failure?

The most common cause of CHF in children is congenital heart disease. Other causes can be diseases of the heart valves, and infections of the heart muscle or heart valves, which all weaken the heart muscle.

What are the signs of CHF?

Signs in a baby	Signs in an older child
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeding problems – not wanting to feed, not feeding well or throwing up (vomiting feeds) • Frequent breaks in feeding to catch his or her breath • Difficulty gaining weight or weight loss • Falling asleep or feeling tired after small feeds • Forehead sweating during feeding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heavy breathing • Unable to keep up with children of the same age • Needs to stop and rest during activity

**If you notice any of these signs,
call your Pediatrician or the Pediatric Cardiology Clinic**

Who will be on my child's health care team?

In addition to the health care team in the Neonatal Nursery, you will also meet these professionals.

- **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 health care 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 health care team will discuss your child's plan of care with you.

- If your child needs to have corrective surgery or a procedure right away, a special team will transfer your child to the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto.
- If your child's condition is stable, your child may need follow-up care. We will make sure that all teaching, appointments and instructions have been given to you before your child leaves the hospital.

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.