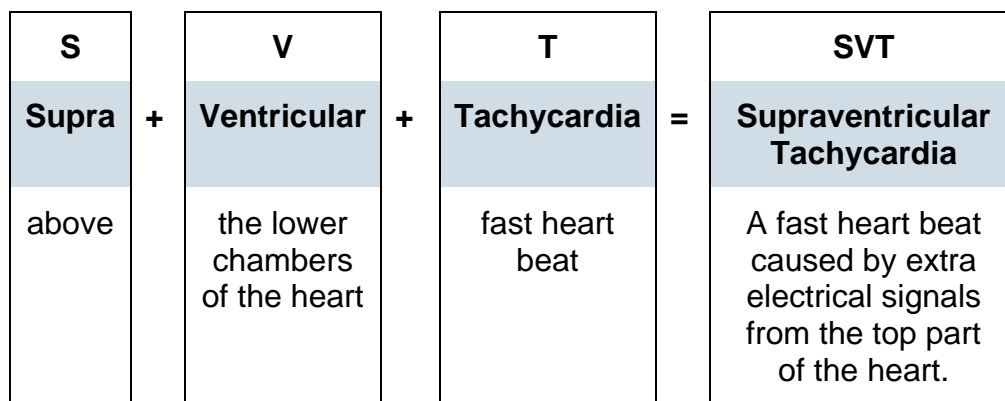


Slowing your child's racing heart

Information for parents of children with supraventricular tachycardia

What is supraventricular tachycardia?

Your child's heart beats rapidly from time to time. This is caused by extra electrical signals in your child's heart. The medical name for this is Supraventricular Tachycardia or SVT.



For most children and teens, a racing heart is not a life-threatening problem. Some children outgrow the problem; others may benefit from treatment.

How do I know when my child's heart is racing?

You may see your child's chest moving quickly up and down with each heart beat. When your child's heart is racing, he or she may also:

- look pale
- feel cool to touch
- be tired
- be irritable
- have trouble sleeping
- feed poorly

Check your child's heart rate, if you have been shown how to do this.

What will make my child's heart beat return to normal?

You may be able to slow your child's heart when it starts to beat fast. We describe how to do this in the next section. These methods have been tried and tested with many children and are safe to do.

If you have already found a way to stop the fast heart rate, please check with your health care provider if this is safe.

To slow your child's racing heart

Babies:

- Put a bag of frozen food (such as peas or corn) or a cold, wet wash cloth over most of your baby's face. Don't cover your baby's nose or mouth.

Toddlers and young children:

- Have your child lie down or sit comfortably and relax as much as possible.
- Put a bag of frozen food (such as peas or corn) or a cold, wet wash cloth over most of your child's face. Don't cover your child's nose or mouth.

OR

- Have your child blow through a straw. Pinch the straw closed and tell your child to continue blowing as long as he or she can.
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Your child's health care

Keep a diary of your child's symptoms. Write down:

- when your child's heart races
- what he or she was doing at the time
- how long it lasts
- what worked to slow the heart

The health care team will review the diary of your child's symptoms. The team will give you information and advice about your child's activities, and recommended follow-up.

If your child's heart races often or the fast heart beat lasts a long time, your child may need treatment. This may be a medication to slow the heart or prevent a rapid heart beat. The team will decide the treatment that is best for your child, based on his or her age, symptoms and test results.

When should I get medical help?

Take your child to the nearest hospital emergency room if your child has any of these problems:

- your child's heart has been racing for over 20 minutes
- your child faints
- your child is extremely tired or difficult to wake
- you are concerned about your child

