

Women's and Children's Department

Heart Murmurs in Babies

Your baby was found to have a heart murmur at their newborn examination. You may find this worrying but we would like to reassure you that the majority of heart murmurs in the newborn period go away within a few weeks to months.

What is a heart murmur?

A normal heart produces heart sounds as valves open and close when the heart pumps blood around the body. A murmur is an extra noise heard when heart is listened to with a stethoscope.

Most babies with heart murmurs have completely normal hearts. These murmurs are called "innocent murmurs" and cause no symptoms. However, sometimes heart murmurs can be a sign of a heart problem.

What causes a murmur?

In newborn babies murmurs may be due to the changes that occur in blood circulation at birth from using the mother's oxygen from the placenta to breathing for themselves outside. These are innocent murmurs.

The Incidence of Congenital Heart Disease is 6 – 9 in 1000 live births. Not all heart problems in babies will cause murmurs during newborn period.

A heart murmur can be a sign of a structural problem of the heart. Some of these may be minor problems which do not need intervention and are reviewed as outpatients.



Patient Information

In a very small number of babies the murmur is due to a more serious problem which needs further investigation, treatment and long term follow up.

We can often tell by listening to the character of the sound whether the murmur is innocent or not. Sometimes we use other tests like an 'ECG' (electrical tracing of the heart) or an ultrasound scan (ECHO) to help us.

What happens after I am told my baby has a heart murmur?

The clinician will check your baby's oxygen saturation levels using a probe on their finger and toe. If the result is abnormal, further tests will be done. If this is normal, your baby will stay in hospital for observation until at least 24 hours old and will be examined again by an experienced paediatrician prior to discharge.

If the baby remains well and the murmur persists, plans will be made for an outpatient follow up appointment.

What signs should I look out for?

- Feeding difficulty and poor weight gain
- Increased effort of breathing - faster breathing, in drawing of the rib cage
- Cyanosis (if baby is turning blue/or dusky, blue colour to lips/tongue)
- Shortness of breath
- Sweating during feeds or clammy skin

These symptoms may not be related to the murmur and could be due to other illnesses.

If you are concerned about your baby, or if they develop any of the problems listed above, you must seek help urgently. You can call your GP, health visitor/midwife or go to your local hospital A&E Department.

Patient Information

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format please ask and we will do our best to meet your needs.

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