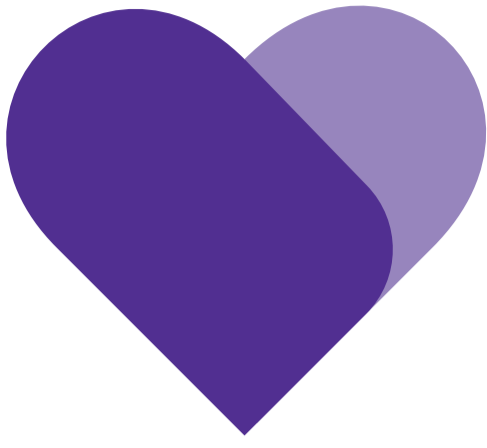


Understanding congenital heart defects in babies



Congenital heart defects (CHDs) are heart conditions present at birth, affecting the heart's structure or function. They're the most common types of birth defects and can impact overall health and development.

Critical CHDs are the most severe types of congenital heart defects and require treatment within the first year of a baby's life. Without it, critical CHDs can lead to serious health complications and even death.



CHDs affect almost 40,000 pregnancies in the US each year. About 25% (1 in 4) of babies with CHD have a critical CHD.

How heart defects impact babies



CHDs can affect different parts of the heart, including chambers, septum, valves, arteries, and veins. They also affect blood flow and can cause a baby's blood to not have enough oxygen or go in the wrong direction. This can lead to other health problems, like fluid buildup in the lungs, which can make it hard for a baby to breathe and even cause heart failure.

More to know about CHD's



Heart defects can start to form during the first six weeks of pregnancy, while the baby's heart is still developing.

The exact causes of most congenital heart defects are still unknown, but certain lifestyle factors, like smoking and drinking alcohol during pregnancy, might contribute to their development.

Other factors that can increase the risk of having a baby with CHD include:

- Certain chronic health conditions, such as lupus and preexisting diabetes
- Infections, such as rubella
- Some prescription medicine, including isotretinoin, lithium, and ACE inhibitors

Your baby is tested for critical CHDs as part of newborn screening before leaving the hospital after birth. If test results show that your baby has a critical CHD, early care and treatment to prevent more serious health problems will be offered. Your baby's provider can refer you to a pediatric cardiologist for treatment.



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