

Congenital Heart Defects



A fact sheet for families

What are Congenital Heart Defects (CHDs)?

- CHDs are heart defects that are present at birth. They are caused by the way the heart forms during pregnancy. The heart is the body's central pump. It pumps blood through the body and to the lungs to collect oxygen. CHDs often affect a person's overall health, energy and growth. CHDs might not be discovered right away—sometimes the first clues appear later in life.
- The heart develops early in pregnancy, from about five to seven weeks after the start of a woman's last menstrual period (LMP).

Are there different kinds of CHDs?

- Yes, there are many different kinds of CHDs. Some are mild, while others are severe. Many occur without any other problems. Some CHDs happen in combination with different birth defects, growth and developmental problems.
- The heart specialist and others may recommend that you see a geneticist to learn whether there is a certain cause or syndrome that explains the heart defects and/or other problems.

Who can have a child with a CHD?

- Anyone can have a child with a CHD. About 1 of every 100 babies (or 1%) has a CHD.
- A person who has a CHD or who has a previous child with a CHD has a 2 to 5% chance of having a child with a CHD. The chance depends on the cause of CHD. Sometimes the cause is not known.

♥ Find out if there is a family history of heart defects. Tell your health provider. Heart defects may be more likely to happen in some families. Knowing family history may help your loved ones get better medical care.

How can I lower the chance of having a baby with a CHD?

- Take a multivitamin with 400 micrograms of folic acid daily.
- Talk to your doctor about controlling your blood sugar levels if you have diabetes. Work on getting to a healthy weight, if you are overweight.
- Before pregnancy, be tested for immunity to rubella.
- Discuss all medications with your doctor.
- Avoid people with the flu or fever.
- Avoid exposure to environmental organic solvents such as paints, varnishes and cleaning agents.

♥ Heart defects develop very early in pregnancy, before some women know they are pregnant. That is why it is important to act before you are pregnant!

What causes CHDs?

- Harmful prenatal exposures
like tobacco and alcohol
 - Maternal conditions
like obesity, diabetes and hypertension
 - Maternal infections
like rubella and influenza
 - Maternal medications
like isotretinoin and anti-seizure medications
 - Genetic conditions
like Down syndrome
- ♥ The cause of many heart defects is still not known.

♥ *CHDs in Michigan*

- Affect 1 or 2 babies in every 100 live births.
 - Have increased over the last 10-15 years, perhaps because of better diagnostic methods.
 - Are reported to the MDCH by hospitals and pediatric genetic clinics.
 - Are monitored by the Michigan Birth Defects Registry to increase understanding and improve services.
- ♥ The outlook for children with CHDs has improved greatly. Babies born with a CHD today live longer and healthier lives than ever before!

If you have lost a pregnancy, infant, child or other loved one due to CHD:

- ♥ You are not alone. Heart defects are still one of the biggest causes of fetal, infant and child deaths.
- ♥ Organizations like Tomorrow's Child and more listed below can offer support and connections to others with similar experiences.
- ♥ The State of Michigan's Sudden Cardiac Death of the Young project works to identify SCDY and improve the early diagnosis of heart conditions. Find more information at www.michigan.gov/genomics.

Information and Support—Michigan

- Genetics Resource Center:
www.MIGeneticsConnection.org
- Family-to-Family Health Information and Education Center: www.bridges4kids/f2f
- Family Center, Children's Special Health Care Services:
www.michigan.gov/cshcs
Call toll free: 1-800-359-3722
E-mail: cshcsfc@michigan.gov
- Tomorrow's Child: www.TomorrowsChildMI.org
Call toll free: 1-800-331-7437

♥ How to reach us:

Michigan Department of Community Health
Birth Defects Program
Toll free: 1-866-852-1247
E-mail: BDRFollowup@michigan.gov

Information and Support—National

- ♥ The March of Dimes' Pregnancy and Newborn Health Education Center at:
www.marchofdimes.com/pnhec/4439_1212.asp
- ♥ The CDC's National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities (NCBDDD) at:
www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/birthdefects/default.htm
- ♥ The National Institute of Health's National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) at:
www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/dci/Diseases/chd/chd_what.html
- ♥ The Kid's Health from Nemours at:
kidshealth.org/parent/medical/heart/congenital_heart_defects.html
- ♥ Helen B. Taussig Children's Heart Center at Johns Hopkins University:
www.pted.org
- ♥ **CongenitalHeartDefects.com**
- ♥ Congenital Heart Information Network:
tchin.org
- ♥ Little Hearts:
www.littlehearts.org

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