
What is a heart murmur?

A murmur describes a sound made as the blood flows through the heart's chambers, valves or even through a hole within the heart. These are fairly common in babies and young children. In many cases children are asymptomatic, so neither they nor their parents will ever know anything about it.

A heart murmur can also be linked to a problem with the way that blood flows through the heart, or a structural problem with the heart.

What causes a heart murmur?

Many murmurs are innocent and result from normal patterns of blood flow through the heart and blood vessels. In rarer cases, a heart murmur can come from abnormal blood flow within the heart and blood vessels. This may be related to either a narrow or leaking valve, or a hole in the wall between the chambers of the heart or between the two main arteries of the heart – a structural problem. About one out of every 100 babies is born with a structural heart problem, otherwise known as a congenital heart defect. These babies may show signs of their defect as early as the first few days of life or later in life.

Symptoms of heart problems include:

- Faster than normal breathing
- Difficulty in breathing
- Difficulty in feeding
- Blueness around the lips
- Poor growth/weight gain.

If any of these are present, your baby would need to be seen by a doctor to be assessed.

Diagnosing heart murmurs

A doctor will listen to your child's heart with a stethoscope. In this way, the doctor will be able to detect the presence of a heart murmur. If a structural defect is suspected, the cause of the murmur needs to be established. Your child might be referred to a paediatric heart specialist for further investigations.

These can include:

- an electrocardiogram (ECG) - a trace of the electrical activity in the heart
- an echocardiogram - an ultrasound scan of the heart which displays the structure, function and blood flow of the heart.

What happens next?

If your child's murmur has a structural cause, your doctor will discuss this with you. They will give you further information on your child's specific heart problem(s) and the follow up care required for your child.

Please contact ward 10 on 01493 452010 if you require further information.

Feedback

We want your visit to be as comfortable as possible. Please talk to the person in charge if you have any concerns. If the ward/department staff are unable to resolve your concern, please ask for our Patient Advice and Liaison (PALS) information. Please be assured that raising a concern will not impact on your care. **Before you leave the hospital you will be asked to complete a Friends and Family Test feedback card.** Providing your feedback is vital in helping to transform NHS services and to support patient choice.

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The hospital can arrange for an interpreter or person to sign to assist you in communicating effectively with staff during your stay. Please let us know.

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PALS 01493 453240**