

Information for patients and carers

Heart murmurs in the newborn

What is a heart murmur?

After your baby is born they receive a range of examinations by a doctor or midwife to check for any medical conditions that may require further investigation. One of these examinations involves listening to your baby's heart sounds with a stethoscope. When they listen to the heart they can hear the sounds of the heart working; blood pumping through the chambers and vessels, plus the valves opening and closing. Normally the sounds form a clear regular pattern. In some babies an 'extra' or 'unusual' sound is heard - this is described as a heart murmur.

What causes this sound, the murmur?

Before a baby is born they get their oxygen from the placenta and their heart has some special connections to allow this to happen, these connections start to close straight after birth but may take a few weeks to completely - sometimes a murmur is heard as the blood passes through these old connections before they fully close.

Another cause of murmurs is because the blood vessels between the heart and the lungs in a new baby are narrow so the blood is heard being pushed through these tight turns. As the baby grows the vessels grow and the murmur disappears; these murmurs have normally disappeared by 6 months of age.

Both of these are known as **innocent murmurs** and the baby has a normal, healthy heart.

Occasionally a heart murmur can be the sign of a problem within the babies' heart.

What can you expect to happen next?

After the doctor or midwife heard the murmur on the first examination of your baby they will have asked a senior colleague to examine your baby and confirm the murmur. Following this your baby will have had their blood pressure and oxygen saturation measured. You will be given an outpatients appointment for your baby to be seen in clinic. If at this time the murmur is still present your baby will be referred for further investigations which will be discussed with you at the time.

What should I do in the meantime?

It is natural for parents to be concerned by the news their baby has a heart murmur but it is worth noting a murmur is not a heart condition, merely a possible indication of one. Most babies with a murmur have a normal, healthy heart. Often the murmur is the sound of the normal transition to baby circulation from foetal circulation. Only a tiny percentage of babies with a murmur are found to have a congenital heart defect that requires treatment.

Whilst you are waiting for your clinic appointment you should feel able to contact your GP and/or health visitor who will have been made aware of your babies murmur to discuss any concerns you have.

What should I look out for?

If your baby becomes unwell it is important that they are seen by a doctor urgently, explain that your baby has a heart murmur and you are waiting to attend clinic.

Signs that your baby is unwell include:

- **Being inactive, quiet or more sleepy than normal**
- **Tired, not interested in feeds or falling asleep during feeds**
- **Baby may be pale, grey or appear mottled**
- **Sweaty, clammy or cold especially hands and feet**
- **Breathing too fast, too slow or sucking in spaces between their ribs with every breath**

Do not hesitate to visit Emergency Department or call 999 if your baby suffers a sudden, dramatic or worrying change in their health.

Remember

A heart murmur is an extra noise heard when listening with a stethoscope not a diagnosis. Most babies with a heart murmur have a completely normal heart.

Sometimes a heart murmur can be a sign of an underlying heart problem.

West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust is actively involved in clinical research. Your doctor, clinical team or the research and development department may contact you regarding specific clinical research studies that you might be interested in participating in. If you do not wish to be contacted for these purposes, please email info.gov@wsh.nsh.uk. This will in no way affect the care or treatment you receive.

If you would like any information regarding access to the West Suffolk Hospital and its facilities please visit the website for AccessAble (the new name for DisabledGo)
<https://www.accessable.co.uk/organisations/west-suffolk-nhs-foundation-trust>



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