

Patient information

Heart murmurs in the newborn

Congratulations on the birth of your new baby!

Your baby has just had a detailed newborn examination and was found to have a heart murmur when the heart was listened to with a stethoscope.

Many parents are understandably worried and upset when they are told their newborn baby has a heart murmur. We hope this leaflet will help address some of your concerns.

What is a heart murmur?

A heart murmur is an extra sound that can be heard in addition to the normal heart beats.

What causes the murmur?

It is common for newborn babies to have heart murmurs in the first few days of life. It can be caused by blood flowing fast through the heart, which is normal for babies.

After birth, normal changes take place in the baby's blood flow pathways and babies can have murmurs if the changes are not complete yet.

Murmurs can also be made by blood crossing through a hole in the heart, a valve that is too narrow or leaky or a vessel that is too narrow. A heart murmur is used as a screening aid to identify a serious heart problem. However the absence of a heart murmur does not exclude a heart problem.

Does a heart murmur mean my baby has a heart problem?

Most murmurs tend to disappear as the baby grows, but a small number of murmurs can sometimes be due to an underlying problem.

How will I know if my baby has a heart problem?

Your baby is otherwise well, so he/she will be discharged home with you and seen in the outpatient clinic in 2-6 weeks. If at the outpatient appointment the murmur is no longer heard, he/she will be discharged back to your general practitioner (GP).

If a murmur is still present your baby will have a heart scan called echocardiogram (similar to the scan used to see the baby in pregnancy) +/- an ECG.

When I go home should I watch out for anything?

Most babies discharged home with a murmur will remain well. However we ask that you pay particular attention to the following:

- Breathing too fast or being breathless unusually (at rest or during feeds)
- Becoming sweaty during feeds
- Poor feeding or poor weight gain
- Blue colour of hands, feet and lips or the skin becoming mottled (red in some places and pale in others)
- Cold hands and feet
- Being unusually sleepy

Although these symptoms do not necessarily mean there is a heart problem, urgent medical advice should be sought as it may also be a sign of other problems unrelated to the heart murmur.

What should I do if I have any concern before my clinic appointment?

You can seek medical advice from:

- Your GP
- NHS Direct – Telephone “111” www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

If you are concerned that your baby might be seriously unwell with any of the above changes, you should:

- Take the baby to the nearest Emergency Department
- Call 999 for an ambulance

If you need to seek medical advice it is helpful if you tell them that your baby has been identified as having a heart murmur.

Who can I speak to if I have any further questions?

Here at the West Suffolk Hospital, you can contact:

Caroline Reeve (Paediatric Cardiology Clinical Nurse Specialist)

Email - caroline.reeve@wsh.nhs.uk

Working hours - Mon-Fri 8am – 4pm

Work mobile number – 07483426369

Paediatric secretaries - 01284 713749

If you are still in the hospital, you can always ask to speak to one of the paediatric medical team members who will be happy to help answer your questions.