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# Heart Murmurs in Newborn Babies

## Paediatrics Department

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## Further Information

We endeavour to provide an excellent service at all times, but should you have any concerns please, in the first instance, raise these with the Matron, Senior Nurse or Manager on duty. If they cannot resolve your concern, please contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 01932 723553 or email [pals@asph.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@asph.nhs.uk). If you still remain concerned please contact our Complaints Manager on 01932 722612 or email [complaints@asph.nhs.uk](mailto:complaints@asph.nhs.uk).

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**Department:** Paediatrics

**Version:** 2

**Published:** Oct 2005

**Review:** Oct 2006

# Heart Murmurs in Newborn Babies

## WHAT IS A HEART MURMUR?

A heart murmur is an extra sound that the doctor may hear when listening to your baby's heart beat.

## ARE HEART MURMURS COMMON IN NEWBORN BABIES?

Yes. Up to one in three newborn babies will have a heart murmur in the first few days of life. Most of these will disappear spontaneously.

## IS IT SERIOUS?

The reason we listen to all newborn babies' heart beats is to exclude serious heart problems, however the majority of babies with heart murmurs do not have an abnormal heart. Many of the extra sounds we hear are called innocent murmurs. An innocent murmur is turbulent blood flow through a normal heart and will have no effect on the health of your baby.

## WHAT HAPPENS NOW?

The doctor may ask some more questions about your baby to help rule out the possibility of heart problems. He/she may ask about how well your baby is feeding or whether the baby has times when the tongue or lips turn blue. An examination including carefully listening to the baby's heart and feeling for the leg pulses is also performed. If the baby seems otherwise well, then the doctor will reassess the murmur before you take your baby home.

## FURTHER INVESTIGATIONS

If the murmur persists, then the doctor may order a chest X-ray and an ECG (heart tracing) to demonstrate the shape and function of the heart. Some babies may require an Echocardiogram, known as Echo for short. This is like an ultrasound scan using a probe and some jelly on the surface of the baby's chest.

## WHAT IF A PROBLEM IS DISCOVERED?

Not all babies will have the same investigations and some will need none at all. If a problem is detected you will be referred to a Consultant Paediatrician

and the doctors will keep you updated on any problems they suspect or have diagnosed. Remember however, that heart murmurs are common and serious heart problems are rare.

### **FOLLOW-UP AFTER GOING HOME**

If the murmur persists but no other heart abnormality is discovered then you will be sent a letter inviting you to attend an outpatient appointment approximately 6 weeks after your discharge from hospital. You will see a paediatric doctor who will check that no problems have developed and listen to see if the murmur has disappeared.

### **ANY QUESTIONS?**

Q Is there anything I should do differently?

A **No. Just carry on with the usual care of your baby.**

Q Is there anything I should look out for?

A **If your baby's tongue turns blue or he is breathless, breathing fast, sweaty or tires on feeding, let your midwife, health visitor or GP know.**

Q Are heart murmurs hereditary?

A **A baby can inherit a tendency to have a heart murmur and some genetic syndromes include heart problems, but many heart murmurs have no genetic basis.**

### **HEART MURMURS**

- Heart murmurs are common
- Serious heart problems are rare
- Key signs to watch out for:
  - Blue tongue
  - Sweating
  - Being short of breath
  - Tiring during feeds
  - Not gaining weight properly
- Any questions, ask ...
  - Health Visitor
  - Family Doctor
  - Hospital Paediatrician

### **FURTHER INFORMATION**

Additional information can be obtained by logging on to the following website [www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org)

Should you require any further advice, please contact one of the following numbers (in Paediatric Outpatient Department):

01932 723494

01932 722397