

Heart Murmurs in Children--What Parents Should Know

What is a heart murmur?

A heart murmur is just a noise that the blood makes as it flows through the heart. It's like the noise water makes when it flows through a hose. Many healthy people have heart murmurs. About 80 percent of all children have a heart murmur at some time.

What is a "normal" heart murmur?

Most heart murmurs don't mean there is anything wrong. Your doctor may call these murmurs "innocent" or "functional." "Normal" is another word to describe these murmurs. A normal murmur is just a noise caused by blood flowing through a normal heart.

A normal murmur can get louder when the blood flows faster through the heart. For example, when the body's temperature goes up, the blood flows faster. Doctors often hear heart murmurs when they check children who have a fever. Many normal murmurs become hard to hear as children grow older. Some murmurs just go away.

What does it mean if my child has a normal heart murmur?

If your child has a normal heart murmur, he or she can run, jump and play, with no limits on activity. Your child doesn't need to take any medicine or be careful in any special way.

When is a heart murmur the sign of a problem?

Sometimes a heart problem causes a murmur. For example:

- ♡ The heart may have a hole in it.
- ♡ A heart valve may leak.
- ♡ A heart valve may not open all the way.

If your doctor thinks that your child might have one of these heart problems, you may be asked to take your child to a pediatric cardiologist. This is a kind of doctor who has spent extra time learning about children's hearts. The cardiologist will examine your child and might do tests to find out if there is a problem.

Heart murmurs are very common in healthy children with normal hearts. If you have any questions about your child's heart murmur, talk to your family doctor.

This handout provides a general overview on this topic and may not apply to everyone. To find out if this handout applies to you and to get more information on this subject, talk to your family doctor.