

HEART MURMURS IN CHILDREN:

When to Be Concerned

A heart murmur is an extra sound heard during the heartbeat cycle. Many murmurs in children are innocent (harmless), but some may indicate an underlying heart condition.



WHAT IS A HEART MURMUR?

The heart normally makes two sounds: "lub-dub" caused by the closing of heart valves.

A murmur is a whooshing or blowing sound created by blood flowing through the heart or blood vessels.

MURMURS CAN BE:

- ✓ **Innocent** (functional/physiologic)
→ harmless and very common in children
- ! **Pathologic**
→ associated with structural heart disease or other medical conditions

COMMON CAUSES OF INNOCENT MURMURS

- Thin chest walls
- Faster heart rates
- Increased blood flow during growth

They are often more noticeable during:



Children with innocent murmurs are usually:

- ✓ Growing normally
- ✓ Active without limitations
- ✓ Free of symptoms

WHEN SHOULD PARENTS BE CONCERNED?

Concerning Symptoms

- Shortness of breath
- Sweating with feeding
- Chest pain
- Blue lips or skin (cyanosis)
- Fainting (syncope)
- Poor weight gain
- Dizziness
- Exercise intolerance
- Poor feeding in infants
- Palpitations

Concerning Examination Findings

- Loud murmur
- Harsh-sounding murmur
- Murmur associated with a click
- Abnormal heart sounds
- Abnormal pulses or blood pressure
- Murmur heard in the back or neck

Important Family History

- Congenital heart disease
- Sudden unexplained death
- Cardiomyopathy
- Genetic syndromes affecting the heart

COMMON HEART CONDITIONS ASSOCIATED WITH MURMURS

- Ventricular septal defect (VSD)
- Atrial septal defect (ASD)
- Patent ductus arteriosus (PDA)
- Pulmonary stenosis
- Aortic stenosis
- Hypertrophic cardiomyopathy
- Mitral valve prolapse



HOW ARE HEART MURMURS EVALUATED?

1. Medical History and Physical Examination

The murmur's timing, location, intensity, radiation, and changes with position can provide important clues.

2. Additional Tests (if needed)

- Electrocardiogram (ECG/EKG)
- Echocardiogram (heart ultrasound)
- Chest X-ray
- Holter monitor or event monitor

The echocardiogram is the most important test for evaluating structural heart disease.

WHEN TO SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION

- Parents should seek evaluation if a child has:
- A newly discovered murmur with symptoms
 - Exercise-related chest pain or fainting
 - Cyanosis (bluish discoloration)
 - Difficulty breathing
 - Poor growth
 - Significant fatigue

IMPORTANT REASSURANCE FOR PARENTS

Most heart murmurs in children are innocent and do not require treatment. Many innocent murmurs disappear as children grow older.

Children with innocent murmurs:

- ✓ Usually have normal hearts
- ✓ Can participate in sports and normal activities
- ✓ Do not need medications
- ✓ Do not require activity restrictions



KEY TAKEAWAY

A heart murmur in a child is often harmless, but proper evaluation is important to distinguish an innocent murmur from an underlying heart condition. Early assessment by a pediatric healthcare professional or pediatric cardiologist can provide reassurance and ensure appropriate care when needed.



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