

# Congenital Heart Disease

## WHAT IS IT?

Congenital heart disease refers to a variety of heart defects that are present from birth.

## BASIC FACTS

- Congenital heart disease is a heart defect that is present from birth.
- Congenital heart disease includes:
  - abnormally formed blood vessels
  - abnormal heart valves
  - abnormalities of the heart muscle or walls,
  - abnormal connections between the heart and the blood vessels
- Congenital heart disease can cause problems in children immediately after they are born or during childhood or adolescence. Sometimes it may not be diagnosed until adulthood.
- Congenital heart disease sometimes requires medications and/or surgery
- Pediatric cardiologists take care of congenital heart disease.
- Adult patients with congenital heart disease may need specialized adult cardiologists with expertise in congenital heart disease.

Congenital heart defects are the most common birth defect. Some defects go away with time, but most require care from a cardiologist to ensure the patient does as well as possible. Defects can be diagnosed at anytime from birth to adulthood. The most severe defects are diagnosed at birth, because the heart defect causes the baby to be ill or because the defect causes an abnormal heart murmur that is heard when the doctor listens with a stethoscope. Less severe defects may not be diagnosed until childhood or adulthood, when symptoms of the defect finally develop or when a murmur is heard. The type of treatment needed and the outcomes depend on the kind of congenital heart defect a patient has.