

Heart Murmurs

Information for Parents and Carers

Heart murmurs in childhood are very common but heart faults are uncommon. It is quite common for healthy children with normal hearts to have a heart murmur.

What is a heart murmur?

A murmur is the noise made as the blood flows through the chambers, tubes and valves of the heart, which is normal. Murmurs in this case are very soft and have a characteristic sound. They are not due to a heart problem and therefore are called “innocent” murmurs. Less commonly it can be due to a defect in the heart, but these sound different compared to normal innocent murmurs.

Why can you hear the murmur now?

A normal murmur may be noted for the first time when a doctor listens to the chest during routine medical examination or when a child has a minor illness. It is often easier to hear when a child is unwell, anxious or has been exerting him or herself. This is because when the heart beats harder, the blood flows around the heart faster and hence a louder sound is generated.

Does my child’s heart murmur need investigation?

No further tests are needed when:

- the noise is typical of an innocent heart murmur
- the sounds made by the heart valves are normal
- the pulses in the arms and legs feel normal

Sometimes, a doctor may be unable to say for certain that the murmur is a normal one. She/he may then ask to examine the child again.

Only if there is doubt whether the murmur is normal or abnormal do further tests need to be done or a cardiology referral made.

Will it disappear?

Normal murmurs often but not always disappear as the child gets older but they are also present in some adults.

If it is a normal murmur, it does not matter if it persists.

For more information about heart normal murmurs heard in children ask your doctor.