



Note on Some Common Types of Congenital Heart Defects in Children

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DESCRIPTION

Congenital Heart Defects (CHDs) are a group of heart conditions that develop during fetal development or at birth. They affect approximately 1 in every 100 babies born in the United States and are the most common type of birth defect. While many CHDs are mild and require little or no treatment, some are life-threatening and require surgery or other interventions.

There are many different types of CHDs, and they can affect any part of the heart or its surrounding blood vessels. Some of the most common types of CHDs include Atrial Septal Defect (ASD) this is a hole in the wall that separates the two upper chambers of the heart (the atria). Blood can flow through this hole and mix between the chambers, which can cause the heart to work harder than it should.

Ventricular Septal Defect (VSD) this is a hole in the wall that separates the two lower chambers of the heart (the ventricles). Blood can flow through this hole and mix between the chambers, which can cause the heart to work harder than it should. Tetralogy of Fallot this is a combination of four heart defects that occur together. It includes a hole in the ventricular septum, a narrowing of the pulmonary valve, an enlarged right ventricle, and an aorta that is shifted to the right.

Transpositions of the Great Arteries in this condition, the two major arteries that carry blood away from the heart are switched. This means that oxygen-poor blood is pumped to the body, and oxygen-rich blood is pumped back to the lungs, which can be life-threatening.

Coarctation of the Aorta this is a narrowing of the aorta, the large artery that carries blood from the heart to the rest of the body. This can cause high blood pressure in the arms and head, while the lower part of the body receives less blood. Hypoplastic Left Heart Syndrome in this condition, the left side of the heart is underdeveloped, which means that it cannot pump blood to the body effectively. This is a life-threatening condition that requires surgery soon after birth.

The symptoms of CHDs can vary widely depending on the type and severity of the defect. In some cases, there may be no symptoms at all, while in others, symptoms can be severe and life-threatening. Some common symptoms of CHDs include Rapid breathing or difficulty breathing, Cyanosis (a bluish tint to the skin or lips), poor feeding or trouble gaining weight, Fatigue or weakness, swelling in the legs or abdomen, Chest pain or palpitations, Fainting or dizziness.

Many CHDs can be diagnosed before birth through fetal ultrasounds or other prenatal tests. After birth, doctors may suspect a CHD based on the baby's symptoms or physical exam. Additional tests may include: Echocardiogram this is an ultrasound of the heart that can help diagnose many types of CHDs. Electrocardiogram (ECG) this is a test that measures the electrical activity of the heart. Chest X-ray this can show the size and shape of the heart and lungs.

Cardiac catheterization this is an invasive test that involves inserting a small tube (catheter) into a blood vessel and threading it to the heart to measure pressures and take pictures. The treatment of CHDs depends on the type and severity.

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