

# Heart murmurs in babies

## Information for parents

This information sheet answers some of the questions you may have when your baby is found to have a heart murmur. It explains the causes and what will happen. If you have any other questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to speak to the doctors or nurses caring for your child.

Your baby was found to have a heart murmur during their newborn examination. We know this may be distressing, but we would like to reassure you that most heart murmurs in the newborn period go away within a few weeks to months.

### **What is a heart murmur?**

The heart produces sounds when the heart valves open and close as it pumps blood around the body. A murmur is an extra sound heard when listening to the heart with a stethoscope.

Most babies with heart murmurs have completely normal hearts. These murmurs are called 'innocent murmurs' and cause no symptoms. However, sometimes heart murmurs can be a sign of a heart problem.

### **What causes a heart murmur?**

In newborn babies, heart murmurs may be due to changes that occur in the blood circulation at or after birth, as the baby transitions from reliance on the mother's oxygen supply through the placenta to using their lungs at birth.

Not all heart problems in babies will cause murmurs during the newborn period.

A heart murmur can be a sign of a structural problem in the heart. Some of these may be minor problems which do not require intervention and will be reviewed regularly as outpatients. In a small number of babies, the heart murmur is due to a more serious problem which needs further investigation, treatment and long-term follow-up.

We can often tell by listening to the character of the sound whether it is innocent or not.

### **What happens now?**

Once a heart murmur has been heard it is important to look for other signs to check that the heart is otherwise normal. If there are no other signs, your baby's doctor will arrange to listen to their heart again after 24 hours or before discharge home. Often the murmur would have gone by then and nothing more will need to be done.

If your baby is unwell, or the murmur continues at the time of discharge, your baby may need to have further tests which may include a heart scan. The character of the sound of the heart murmur and additional tests will determine the timing of the heart scan. You may be given an appointment to be seen in the outpatients for a heart scan. If a heart problem is diagnosed, we will give you more information at the time about what it means for your baby.

**A heart scan called an echocardiogram is an ultrasound scan like the scan done during pregnancy with the use of gel. There is no risk of radiation. The scan is designed to show the structure, function and blood flow of the heart, and will aim to rule out any underlying problem.**

## **What are the symptoms I should look for when I take my baby home?**

You should seek urgent advice from your midwife, health visitor or GP or go to your local hospital A&E department if your baby:

- looks blue around the lips or tongue or has pale skin
- has difficulty breathing (increased effort breathing and drawing in of the rib cage)
- has feeding difficulty including poor weight gain
- has sweaty or clammy skin
- is breathless during feeding

## **MyChart**

Our MyChart app and website lets you securely access parts of your health record with us, giving you more control over your care. To sign up or for help, call us on **020 3299 4618** or email **kings.mychart@nhs.net**. Visit **www.kch.nhs.uk/mychart** to find out more.

## **Sharing your information**

King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust has partnered with Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust through the King's Health Partners Academic Health Sciences Centre. We are working together to give our patients the best possible care, so you might find we invite you for appointments at Guy's or St Thomas' hospitals. King's College Hospital and Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trusts share an electronic patient record system, which means information about your health record can be accessed safely and securely by health and care staff at both Trusts. For more information visit **www.kch.nhs.uk**.

## **Care provided by students**

We provide clinical training where our students get practical experience by treating patients. Please tell your doctor or nurse if you do not want students to be involved in your care. Your treatment will not be affected by your decision.

## **PALS**

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) is a service that offers support, information and assistance to patients, relatives and visitors. They can also provide help and advice if you have a concern or complaint that staff have not been able to resolve for you. They can also pass on praise or thanks to our teams.

Tel: **020 3299 4618**

Email: **kings.pals@nhs.net**

**If you would like the information in this leaflet in a different language or format, please contact our Interpreting and Accessible Communication Support on 020 3299 4618 or email [kings.access@nhs.net](mailto:kings.access@nhs.net)**