

Newborn Heart Murmurs

Children's Services

Women and Children's Services

This leaflet has been designed to give you important information about your condition / procedure, and to answer some common queries you may have.

Information for patients and visitors

Introduction

Congratulations on the birth of your newborn.

Your baby has just had a detailed newborn examination and was found to have a heart murmur when the heart was listened to with a stethoscope.

Many parents are understandably worried and upset when they are told their newborn baby has a heart murmur. We hope this leaflet will help address some of your concerns.

What is a heart murmur?

A heart murmur describes an extra sound that can be heard in addition to the normal beats and can only be heard using a stethoscope. The sounds are made by the blood flowing through the heart. Heart murmurs are common in the newborn period.

Does a heart murmur mean my child has a heart problem?

The term heart murmur is not a diagnosis of an illness or disorder. Although a small number of murmurs can sometimes be a sign that there is a problem with the heart, the majority of babies never have a heart problem.

What happens next?

If the doctor, neonatal practitioner or midwife who examined your baby feels that your baby requires immediate attention they will remain in hospital. They may either remain with you on the maternity ward or transferred to the Neonatal Unit with the reasons for this and a plan of care explained to you.

If your baby is otherwise well, they will be discharged home with you but will be seen in the paediatric outpatient clinic within 3 weeks.

If at the outpatient appointment the murmur is no longer heard, they will be discharged back to your general practitioner (GP).

If a murmur is still present we will arrange for your baby to have a heart ultrasound scan called echocardiogram. This may be carried out on the same day or you may be given an appointment to come back on a different day.

What is an echocardiogram?

An echocardiogram is a similar sort of scan to those used during pregnancy. It is painless and looks at the structures of the heart and how well it is functioning.



Information for patients and visitors

When I go home, should I watch out for anything?

Most babies discharged home with a murmur will remain well. However we ask that you pay particular attention to the following:

- Breathlessness – is your baby too breathless to feed?
- sweaty when feeding
- poor feeding
- blue colour of hands, feet and lips or the skin becoming mottled (red in some places and pale in others)

Although these symptoms do not necessarily mean there is a heart problem, urgent medical advice should be sought as it may be a sign of other problems unrelated to the heart murmur.

What should I do if I have any concern before my clinic appointment?

You can seek medical advice from:

- Your GP
- NHS Direct – Telephone “111” www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk
- Attend the nearest Accident & Emergency Department
- Dial “999” for an ambulance

If you need to seek medical advice it is helpful if you tell them that your baby has been identified as having a heart murmur.

Why is it beneficial to detect a heart murmur early?

As with all conditions, the earlier a heart problem is identified, the sooner investigations and if necessary treatment can start.

What are the risks of having a heart murmur?

A heart murmur is used as a screening aid to identify a serious heart problem. However the absence of a heart murmur does not exclude a heart problem.

Are there alternative treatments?

There are no alternatives all babies born in our hospital must have their hearts listened to during the first examination. If a heart murmur is still heard during the outpatient appointment, an echocardiogram can help doctors decide on the plan of care / treatment for your baby.

If you have any concerns please do not hesitate to speak to a doctor or a member of nursing / midwifery staff.



Information for patients and visitors

Contact Details within the Trust for Patients to Obtain Additional Information

Rainforest Ward, Diana Princess of Wales Hospital, Grimsby

Tele: 03033 304477

Children's Services Community Nursing Team - Grimsby

Tele: 03033 304509

Disney Ward, Scunthorpe General Hospital, Scunthorpe

Tele: 03033 302553

Children's Services Community Nursing Team - Scunthorpe

Tele: 03033 306153

References

Northern Lincolnshire & Goole NHS Foundation Trust Guideline for Treatment of Heart Murmurs in the Newborn.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service offers confidential advice, support and information on any health related matters.

If you have a comment, concern, complaint or compliment about the care or service you have received from the Trust you can contact the PALS team as follows:

Telephone: 03033 306518

Email: nlg-tr.PALS@nhs.net

There are also offices at both the Diana Princess of Wales Hospital (near the main entrance) and Scunthorpe General Hospital (on the C Floor, near the outpatient department), should you wish to visit.

Please note: PALS should not be contacted for clinical advice relating to the content of this leaflet. The service should be contacted directly in the first instance.

Information for patients and visitors

Northern Lincolnshire and Goole NHS Foundation Trust

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DN15 7BH

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Date of Issue: May, 2018

Review Period: May, 2021

Author: Neonatal Ward Sister

IFP-0650 v1.2

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