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Heart Murmur

Paediatric Department

What is a Heart murmur?

A heart murmur is an extra sound heard when listening to your child's normal heartbeat. The sound is generated as the blood travels around the "plumbing system of the heart". Your health professional may describe it as a "whooshing" or "swishing" noise. It is common in babies and young children.

What are the causes for a heart murmur?

The most common reason for hearing a heart murmur is when your child presents with a fever or illness. The heart tends to pump faster and harder causing turbulence of the blood flowing through the vessels. This can be heard as the extra noise and is also called an "Innocent or Flow murmur". Often when your child is better the murmur may disappear. The sound may also change with your child's position. In all cases of innocent murmurs, the heart is working normally and will disappear when your child grows up. In some cases, however, the extra sound heard may indicate there is a problem with the structure (plumbing system) of the heart and its connections. If this is thought to be the case, then there are further investigations and treatments available and your doctor will explain these.

What are the signs and symptoms?

The doctor will ask you detailed questions about how your child is feeding, growing and about heart problems in the family. With innocent murmurs, however, there are no other signs (apart from the extra sound) or symptoms as the heart is working normally.

How is a heart murmur investigated?

If your child is a very young baby when the heart murmur is heard, your doctor may ask for an ECG (electrocardiograph), this

involves placing stickers on the front of your child's chest which connects to a small computer and prints the electrical tracing of your baby's heart. Your doctor may also ask for your baby's blood pressure to be checked in their arms and legs, in addition to their saturations (indicates how well the blood is carrying oxygen around your baby's body). A chest x-ray may also be performed to look at your baby's heart size and shape.

If your child is older/ toddler and has been diagnosed with an illness that may be a reason for the heart murmur, the hospital doctor will ask your GP to recheck the heart murmur after their illness, as it may have gone completely.

If your doctor feels that they would like to ensure that the heart murmur is not due to an underlying problem with structure and connections of the heart, they may refer your child to be reviewed in our paediatric outpatient clinic, to reassess the heart murmur and decide whether further investigations are required.

How is it treated?

No further follow up or treatment is required if your child clearly has an innocent murmur.

Further Information

We endeavour to provide an excellent service at all times, but should you have any concerns please, in the first instance, raise these with the Matron, Senior Nurse or Manager on duty.

If they cannot resolve your concern, please contact our Patient Experience Team on 01932 723553 or email asp-tr.patient.advice@nhs.net. If you remain concerned, the team can also advise upon how to make a formal complaint.

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