



# Innocent Heart Murmur Patient information Leaflet

May 2020

This leaflet aims to help you understand what an innocent heart murmur is and how we treat and care for children with this condition.

**A heart murmur is an extra or unusual sound made by the heart. It is usually the sound of the blood moving its way around the tight bends inside a babies or young child's heart. The sound resembles a "whooshing" or "swishing" noise.** Heart murmurs are very common in babies and young children. Many young children have heart murmurs and neither they nor their parents will ever know anything about it. In the majority of cases of heart murmurs the heart is working normally and there isn't anything to worry about.

Occasionally though, a heart murmur can be linked to a problem with the way that blood flows through the heart, or a structural problem with the heart. Even if an underlying problem is the reason for a baby's heart murmur, there is treatment available.

## **What causes heart murmurs?**

Young children and babies have small, slim chests so their hearts are nearer to a stethoscope than those of teenagers and adults, and their heart rate is faster.

Blood has to negotiate two tight bends as it flows through the heart. The flow of blood travelling through the heart and blood vessels in this way can also make a noise, and this is known as an 'innocent' murmur. Innocent murmurs can sometimes come and go. They can become noisier if the heart is beating fast such as if a child is anxious, after exercise or with a fever - and quieter as a child sleeps.

As your child grows, the heart rate slows and the heart grows and lies deeper within the body. The normal bends within the heart become less tight, and an innocent murmur therefore disappears.

In rarer cases, a heart murmur can come from abnormal blood flow within the heart and blood vessels. This might be related to either a narrow or leaking valve, or a hole in the wall between the two chambers of the heart or between the two main arteries of the heart.

## **What are the signs and symptoms of a heart murmur?**

There are no outward signs or symptoms of an innocent heart murmur. Its presence is usually only detected during a routine doctor's examination.

## **How are heart murmurs diagnosed?**

A doctor can hear normal heart valves closing and producing regular heart sounds by listening to the heart with a stethoscope. The doctor will be able to detect the presence of a heart murmur by listening with a stethoscope.

## **How are heart murmurs treated?**

Some murmurs are clearly 'innocent' when heard through a stethoscope. If the murmur is innocent, no follow-up or treatment is needed. If your child is unwell when the heart murmur is heard they may recommend that the heart is listened to again when your child is better.

If the quality of the murmur suggests that it might be due to some sort of structural oddity, the cause of the murmur needs to be established. Even then, most murmurs are not signs of a serious heart problem in children with no other symptoms.

A child might be referred to a heart specialist (Paediatric Cardiologist) for a thorough examination and possibly further investigations such as an echocardiogram (an ultrasound scan of the heart).

This scan is designed to show the structure, function and blood flow of the heart, and will aim to rule out any underlying problem.

## What happens next?

In most cases, an innocent murmur disappears as a child gets older and the bends within the heart become less tight. However if your child or baby becomes breathless, sweaty during feeds or looks blue or pale seek further medical advice.

### Useful Contact Numbers:

- Children's Unit 0161 922 5252 (24 hrs)
- NHS Direct 111 (24hr helpline)
- You can also contact your GP for advice.

### Useful Websites/information:

- British Heart Foundation ([www.bhf.org.uk](http://www.bhf.org.uk))
- Department of Health ([www.dh.gov.uk](http://www.dh.gov.uk))
- NHS Choices ([www.nhs.uk/conditions](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions))
- NHS institute for innovation and improvement ([www.institute.nhs.uk](http://www.institute.nhs.uk))
- NHS Improvement ([www.improvement.nhs.uk](http://www.improvement.nhs.uk))

If you have any questions you want to ask, you can use this space below to remind you

If you have a visual impairment this leaflet can be made available in bigger print or on audiotape. If you require either of these options please contact the Patient Information Centre on 0161 922 5332

If you require an interpreter, please ask an appropriate person to contact our central booking office between Monday to Friday 8am to 5pm on 0161 922 6991 to arrange this for you.

**語言 翻譯及病者支持服務 (LIPS):**

如果閣下需要翻譯員在您的預約當日幫助您的話 請找一名合適的家庭成員 **0161 922 6991** 聯絡本中央預約辦事處來您您安排 我們的辦公時間是星期一至星期五 上午 8 時至下午 5 時

**Językowo Tłumaczeniowa Usługa Pomocy dla Pacjenta ( Language, Interpretation and Patient Support Service LIPS):**

Jeśli potrzebujesz pomocy tłumacza w trakcie swojej wizyty, proszę poprosić odpowiedniego członka rodziny o skontaktowanie się z Centralnym Biurem Zamówień (Central Booking Office), w celu zorganizowania tłumacza pomiędzy poniedziałkiem a piątkiem w godzinach od 08:00 - 17:00 pod numerem **0161 922 6991**.

لینگوئج، انٹرپریٹیشن اینڈ پیسٹنٹ سپورٹ سروس (لپس Lips)

اگر آپ کو اپنی اپائنٹمنٹ کے لئے مترجم کی مدد کی ضرورت ہو تو براہ مہربانی اپنے خاندان کے کسی موزوں فرد سے کہیں کہ وہ ہمارے سنٹرل بنگ آفس سے پیر سے جمعہ 8.00 بجے صبح سے 5.00 بجے شام کے دوران 01619226991 پر فون کر کے اس کا بندوبست کریں۔

*Adapted from*

*GOSH (2011) Heart Murmurs (innocent)*

*Liverpool Womens Hospital (2015) Heart Murmurs – information for parents.*

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