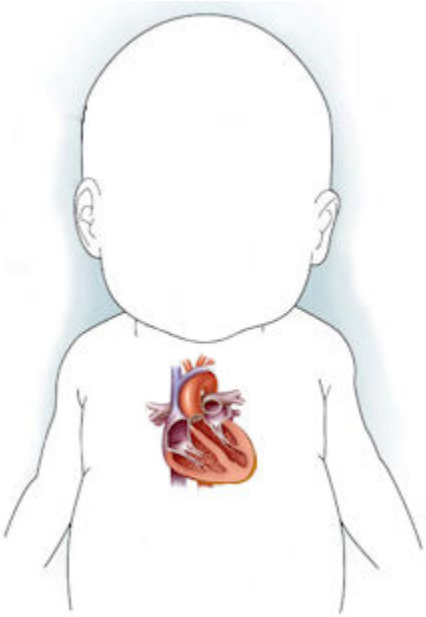
Innocent Heart Murmur, Pediatric

A heart murmur is an extra or unusual sound heard during a heartbeat. It is the sound of blood passing through the heart's chambers and valves and through nearby blood vessels. Heart murmur sounds like a whooshing or swishing noise. Heart murmur sounds may range from very soft to very loud. Innocent heart murmurs are harmless. They can come and go throughout life. Innocent heart murmurs usually have no symptoms and are common in healthy children. Health care professionals usually diagnose innocent heart murmurs in children between infancy and early childhood during routine checkups.



CAUSES

Heart murmurs are more easily detected in children because they have thin chest walls. Some childhood murmurs are caused by a tiny hole in the heart wall. These defects normally close as the child grows. In other instances, heart murmurs are caused by faulty valves.

SYMPTOMS

- Children with innocent heart murmurs experience no symptoms and do not have heart disease.
- Innocent heart murmurs usually do not cause symptoms or require your child to limit physical activity.
- Innocent heart murmurs are not the same as pathological murmurs. These signal potentially dangerous problems in the heart muscle or valves. Pathological murmurs have a different sound.

DIAGNOSIS

Murmurs have grades. Grade 1 is the softest-sounding murmur, and grade 6 is the loudest. A murmur graded 4, 5 or 6 is so loud you can actually feel a rumbling from it under the skin if you put your hand on the child's chest. Murmurs grow louder when the child is anxious or exercises.

TREATMENT

If a pediatrician or family caregiver diagnoses an innocent heart murmur, he or she will probably not recommend any further medical attention or follow-up. Children with an innocent heart murmur do not need to restrict their activities and do not need to take any medications for the condition.

However, if the health-care provider feels that the heart murmur is more serious, he or she may refer your child to a heart specialist for further tests. These may include:

- A test that records the electrical activity of the heart (*EKG*).
- A test that produces pictures of the heart using sound wave technology (*echocardiogram*).
- A test that uses strong magnets and radio waves together to form a sharp image (*cardiac MRI*).

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF YOUR CHILD:

- Has difficulty with breathing or catching their breath.
- Has chest pain.
- Has dizziness or fainting.
- Has irregular, “skipping,” or fast heart beats.
- Has a cough that does not go away or your child coughs after physical activity.
- Is more tired than usual.

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