

Adult Congenital Heart Fact Sheet

What is a congenital heart defect?

- A congenital heart defect is a problem with the heart's structure that is present at birth.
- Common defects include holes in the heart and misplaced, malformed, and/or missing valves, vessels, and heart chambers. Heart defects often involve a combination of problems.

How common are congenital heart defects?

- Heart defects are the most common birth defect. About one in 120 babies are born with some kind of heart defect.
- Heart defects are about three times more common than muscular dystrophy and childhood cancer and about 40 times more common than cystic fibrosis.
- There are about one million adults and 800,000 children living with congenital heart defects in the United States. Thanks to increases in survival, the number of adults rises by 5% a year.
- At least 10% of all congenital heart defects are first found in adulthood.

What are common issues associated with heart defects?

- Common long-term problems of CHD include rhythm problems, valve problems, heart failure, heart infection, and stroke.
- All those born with heart defects have an increased risk of developing additional heart problems.
- 50% of heart defect patients born with more complex problems face a high risk of developing new heart problems as they age.
- Many adults with heart defects require additional heart surgeries.
- Most adults with heart defects have few or no ongoing physical limitations or symptoms.

What are the long-term outcomes for adults with heart defects?

- Due to medical breakthroughs, over 90% of children born with heart defects are now expected to live to adulthood and beyond.
- With appropriate medical care, adults with all kinds of heart defects can now live longer, fuller lives than ever before.

Most Important

All adults born with more complex defects should be seen regularly by congenital heart defect specialists.