

Adult Congenital Cardiac Service

PREGNANCY: A Guide for Congenital Heart Patients

Many women with congenital heart disease are able to have children with little or no additional risk.

This guide helps to explain some of the issues and tells you how we can help.

In the second half of pregnancy your heart pumps 50% extra blood compared to normal. Because of this the heart works a lot harder during pregnancy. Nevertheless, most women with congenital heart conditions are able to have children without major problems.

-  Different heart conditions have different risks for pregnancy. You should always talk to your cardiologist before you consider starting a family – he or she will be able to advise you about your pregnancy and how it relates to your particular heart condition.
-  A few heart conditions, such as Eisenmenger syndrome, make the risk of pregnancy much higher. The risk is also high for some, but not all women with Marfan – your cardiologist will explain the risk to you.
-  We like to have as much information as possible about your heart prior to you becoming pregnant. Because of this, your cardiologist may suggest that you have some extra tests like an exercise test or MRI scan, before you start to try for a baby. This is so that we can give you the most accurate information about how safe pregnancy is for you.
-  Some medications can be harmful to a baby before it is born. These include Warfarin and drugs like Captopril (ACE-Inhibitor drugs) as well as some others. You should discuss your medicines with your doctor before you get pregnant. If you become pregnant before you have had the chance to talk to us, you should get in touch straight away.
-  We may want to see you more frequently during your pregnancy. Because of this, we may ask you to come to the clinic 2 or 3 times, or sometimes even more, during and after your pregnancy.
-  If you are admitted to hospital during your pregnancy with heart problems or other serious troubles, please have a relative notify your cardiologist or the adult congenital liaison nurse. We can help if needed.
-  Most women with congenital heart conditions can have their baby by a normal vaginal delivery and do not need to have a caesarean section. Of course, your obstetrician may suggest a C-section for reasons not related to your heart.
-  For most congenital heart patients, the risk of your baby having a heart condition is slightly raised, but is still quite low – often less than 5%. A few women will have a higher risk, even up to 50%. We can advise you about the chance of your baby having a heart condition and can arrange for the baby to have a heart scan at around 18 – 20 weeks gestation if necessary.

FOR FURTHER ASSISTANCE OR QUESTIONS PLEASE CONTACT:

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