

## What is An Innocent Heart Murmur?

A heart murmur is an extra sound that a physician hears when he listens to the heart. Normally when we listen to the heart you can hear the familiar “lub-dub” that is caused by the closing of normal valves. Some times a murmur is caused by a hole in the heart or something wrong with one of the valves. For this reason your Pediatrician may be worried about what he or she hears.

Most of the time a murmur is INNOCENT, caused by the sound of blood flowing through the chambers of the heart or the arteries coming out of the heart. The heart structures themselves are NORMAL. You might compare this to when you turn on a faucet and hear water running through the pipes in the wall. There is nothing wrong with the pipes, its just that as the water flows through them you hear a noise. It is the same thing with the heart. The blood has to make several hair-pin turns as it goes through the heart and out to the lungs and this can create some turbulence. Sometimes the sound or murmur may change in quality when the child changes position or turns his neck.

You may have heard of people “out growing” their murmurs. What probably happens is that as we get bigger the chest wall becomes thicker and the distance from the heart to the surface increases and it becomes more difficult to hear. Eventually the murmur goes away. Some people think that they inherit murmurs, or pass them on to their children. The truth is that murmurs are very common and for the most part there is nothing “abnormal “ to pass on. Very rarely, specific heart conditions that cause murmurs can be inherited.

Murmurs may be noticed more easily when the heart beating faster than normal and hence creating more turbulence. For example if your child has a fever or is dehydrated or has a low blood count, this may cause your doctor to hear a murmur. Again, in this instance the heart itself is structurally normal. Sometimes it is hard to hear a murmur if the child is not very cooperative.

About half of all kids get told at some point that they have a heart murmur. If your child has an innocent heart murmur, then he or she may be treated as normal. There is no need for restriction of activity. There is no need to give “Antibiotic prophylaxis “ when he or she goes to the dentist or has surgery. Once your child is diagnosed as having an innocent heart murmur there is seldom need for a reevaluation by our office.

If you have any questions, please ask one of the doctors.