

# Pregnancy and Congenital Heart Disease

## Questions You Could Ask Your Doctor

Congenital heart disease (CHD) is a range of conditions present at birth and can affect the structure of a baby's heart and the way it works. CHD is the most common form of birth defect affecting about 40,000 babies each year<sup>i</sup>. Talk to your doctor early about your baby's risk for a congenital heart defect and how you can monitor it during your pregnancy.

### Questions to ask your OB-GYN physician about congenital heart disease if you are pregnant or planning to become pregnant.

#### What are the risk factors for congenital heart disease?

The risk of having a baby with CHD depends on a variety of factors including your family history or environmental exposure.<sup>ii</sup> Additionally, a CHD may occur even when there aren't any risk factors present.

#### Are there ways to check for congenital heart disease while I am still pregnant?

A physician may be able to evaluate the chambers of the baby's heart during a woman's 20-week anatomy scan.<sup>iii</sup>

#### How can I support my baby's heart health during my pregnancy?

What's good for mom is good for baby. When women take care of their cardiovascular health by doing things like eating a nutritious diet, staying active, managing their blood pressure and cholesterol levels, and not smoking or vaping their babies get their best start at life.<sup>iv</sup>

#### After my baby is born, what tests are done to check their heart health?

A pulse oximetry test screens newborns for CHD. A pulse oximeter machine is placed on the baby's skin and estimates the amount of oxygen in a baby's blood. The test is painless and takes only a few minutes.<sup>v</sup>

#### To learn more about CHDs and the risk factors visit [heart.org/chd](https://heart.org/chd).

The Children's Heart Foundation and the American Heart Association are proud to join forces to raise awareness and advance lifesaving research for congenital heart defects.



Sources:  
[i] Centers for Disease Control Data and Statistics on Congenital Heart Defects <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/heartdefects/data.html>  
[ii] American Heart Association – Understanding Your Risk Factors for CHD <https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/congenital-heart-defects/understand-your-risk-for-congenital-heart-defects>  
[iii] Screening for fetal congenital heart disease <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5367993/>  
[iv] Go Red for Women – Having a healthy pregnancy <https://www.goredforwomen.org/en/learn-your-risk/pregnancy-and-maternal-health/having-a-healthy-pregnancy>  
[v] CDC – Congenital Heart Defects <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/heartdefects/ckhd-facts.html#---text=Newborn%20screening%20for%20critical%20CHDs%20involves%20a%20simple%20bedside%20test.placed%20on%20the%20baby%20skin>