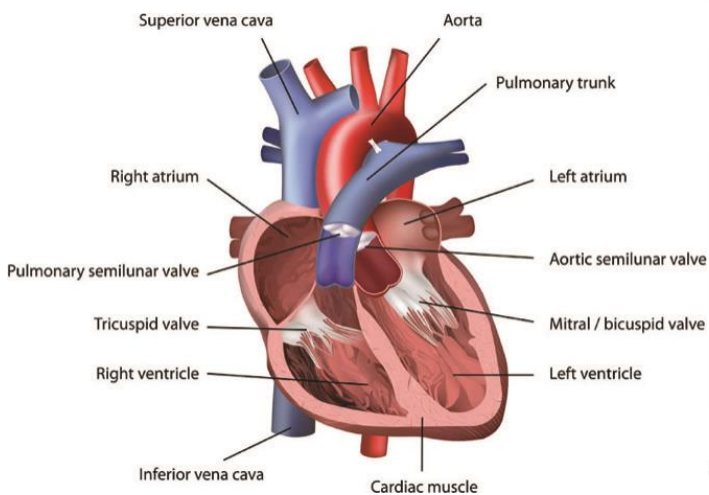


HEART MURMUR: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

What is a heart murmur?

The heart may be likened to a noisy pump producing a variety of sounds, much like an orchestra. When doctors listen to the heart with a stethoscope, they can hear the sounds of the working heart. These include the action of the blood moving around the heart and out into the big vessels as well as the closing of the heart valves. A heart murmur is the sound the blood makes when it is moving through the heart.



Grading(Freeman & Levine 1933)

Grade of murmur	Basis
Grade 1	Faint murmur heard on careful auscultation
Grade 2	Easily audible not loud
Grade 3	Easily audible loud murmur but no thrill
Grade 4	Murmur with thrill
Grade 5	Murmur audible stethoscope audible to chest
Grade 6	Murmur audible half an inch from the chest. Associated with thrill.

GRADE 3/6 or more intensity of systolic murmur is clinically significant with few exceptions but diastolic murmur of any degree of intensity is organic in nature

What is an innocent heart murmur?

The most common type of heart murmur in children is that of the sound of the blood moving through a structurally normal heart, hence we also call these physiological or functional murmurs. Some heart murmurs may be because of a problem with the structure of the heart such as a narrow or leaking valve or holes between the chambers of the heart.

Almost all children will have an innocent murmur at one time or another. This is because they have small, slim chests so their hearts are nearer to a stethoscope than those of adults. Further, their hearts beat faster, so the blood moves around with more speed. Innocent murmurs are louder when the heart is beating faster than usual. The heart can beat faster, for example if your child is anxious or having a fever.



Children with innocent murmurs do not need restriction of activities, a special diet, special treatment or further cardiology follow up. If your child has an innocent murmur consider it to be a normal situation. It is not even a potential problem. As the years go by the heart grows and lies deeper within the body and the heart rate slows, therefore most innocent murmurs will go away on their own as a child gets older.

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