

Innocent murmur – patient information leaflet



What is a heart murmur?

There are normally two heart sounds. A heart murmur is an extra noise heard along with or in between the heart sounds on listening with a stethoscope. They often resemble a whooshing sound.

What causes a heart murmur?

A murmur is heard due to blood flow within the heart or the blood vessels connected to the heart. This may be due to an abnormality in the structure of the heart such as a hole between the pumping chambers or a valve abnormality. It can also occur merely due to the way blood flows within a normal heart.

What is an innocent heart murmur?

A murmur is called innocent when heard in an otherwise normal heart. It is a common finding in children. Up to 80% of children have heart murmurs at some point and only 1% of children have actual congenital heart disease.

What do I need to look out for?

You should seek medical attention if you are concerned regarding breathlessness, feeding difficulty (inc. breathlessness and sweating when feeding), poor weight gain, lethargy or blue discoloration of the tongue.

How can you differentiate innocent murmurs from abnormal murmurs?

Innocent murmurs are never loud. They are soft in nature and usually heard in one area of the chest only. They are heard intermittently but tend to become louder during an episode of illness or excitement. Innocent murmurs usually change in intensity with position or breathing.

Should I be worried?

Innocent murmurs are commonly heard in children and may disappear over time; although they can persist into adulthood as well. They never cause problems as the heart structure is normal. No further investigations or treatment are required and children do not need any follow up. There are no health implications. No precautions are needed for travel or exercise.

Summary

- Innocent murmurs are very common in children.
- They are more prominent when your child is excited or unwell.
- There are no long-term implications for an innocent murmur.
- No further investigations are necessary.