

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 extra flow of blood 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 but it can also occur merely due to the way blood flows in 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 30% of women have an innocent murmur during pregnancy merely because their heart works a little harder at that time.

What do I need to look out for?

This can happen due to blood flowing through the large veins of the heart or from the flow of blood around the bends of the normal heart.

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.