



Five Things To Know About Heart Defects

Heart defects are conditions that are present at birth and can affect the structure of a person's heart and the way it works. Heart defects are common, costly, and critical conditions that affect people throughout their lives. Here are five things to know about heart defects:



Heart defects are common

Heart defects are the most common type of birth defect. In the United States, about 40,000 babies are born with a heart defect each year.



Heart defects can be diagnosed before birth, at birth, or after a baby leaves the hospital

Some heart defects can be found during pregnancy by looking at ultrasound pictures of the heart of the developing baby. Other heart defects aren't detected until birth through newborn screening, or later in life, during childhood or adulthood. Screening newborns for heart defects allows them to be treated early and may prevent other health problems or early death.



Heart defects are costly

In the United States, hospital costs can exceed \$6 billion a year to care for people living with heart defects. Families of children with heart problems who have special healthcare needs may experience high out-of-pocket medical expenses, impacts on employment, and other financial problems.



People with heart defects are living longer

As medical care and treatment have advanced, people with heart defects are living longer and healthier lives. Scientists estimate that more than 2 million people in the United States are living with a heart defect.



People with heart defects need lifelong specialty care for their hearts

Even with improved treatments, many people with a heart defect are not cured, even if their heart defect has been repaired. People with a heart defect can develop other health problems over time, depending on their specific heart defect, the number of heart defects they have, and the severity of their heart defect. Ongoing appropriate medical care for their heart defect will help children and adults live as healthy a life as possible.

To learn more about heart defects, please visit www.cdc.gov/heartdefects



Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities