

Congenital heart defects are the most common type of birth defect. Learn about prevention and diagnosis.

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This fact sheet will explain how congenital heart defects are caused and how they can be prevented. It will also tell you how healthcare providers find heart defects, which enables parents to plan.



Take important steps to help prevent congenital heart defects.

Congenital Heart Defects

The most common birth defect in the U.S.



40,000 babies born with a congenital heart defect in the United States each year.



4,000,000 babies born in the United States each year.

40,000 out of 4 million babies are born with a heart defect each year in the U.S.

What is a congenital heart defect?

Congenital heart defects are conditions present at birth that affect how a baby's heart is made and the way it works. They are the most common type of birth defects. In the United States, about 40,000 infants are born with a heart defect each year.

Some congenital heart defects can be prevented.

Scientists don't know the cause of most congenital heart defects. Some babies have heart defects because of changes in their genes or chromosomes. Congenital heart defects may be caused by both changes in genes or chromosomes and other risk factors, such as being obese or having diabetes.

Women can take some important steps before and during pregnancy to help prevent congenital heart defects. These actions can increase the chance of having a healthy baby.



Work to get to and stay at a healthy weight



Quit smoking



Control diabetes



Look for a multivitamin that contains 400 mcg of folic acid.

A diagnosis helps families plan.

Some congenital heart defects can be found before birth. Knowing if a baby has a heart defect before birth can help families plan for the future.

Some heart defects can be found at birth, because they can cause a baby to have bluish tinted nails or lips or troubled breathing. You may wish to speak with your health care provider about whether your hospital screens all babies soon after birth for congenital heart defects.

Other heart defects are not found until later in life, during childhood or even adulthood. If a healthcare provider thinks a congenital heart defect is present, the baby can have several tests to diagnose the defect.

For more information, visit http://www.address_here or call 1-800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636).

