

## Atrial Septal Defect (ASD)

### Normal Heart

The normal heart has four chambers. The two top chambers receive blood from the body and lungs. These chambers are called the atria. The two bottom chambers pump blood to the body and lungs. These are called the ventricles. These chambers are separated by walls known as the atrial septum and ventricular septum.

### Atrial Septal Defect

An atrial septal defect (ASD) is a congenital heart defect. It is present at birth. This type of defect is a hole in the wall (septum) between the right and left atria. This hole allows blood to flow across from the left side, where the pressure is high, to the right side, where the pressure is lower.

These defects may vary in size. They may be present in many places in the atrial wall. Rarely, a person may have more than one of these.

### Signs and Symptoms

Sometimes an abnormal heart sound is heard during a routine exam. You will be referred to a cardiologist for further testing. A healthy person should have no symptoms as a result of this defect.

### Testing

A member of the health care team will do a complete exam and a health history.

An ultrasound of the heart is called an echocardiogram. It may be done to confirm the presence of the defect. It is also done to find the site and the size of the defect. If the ASD is large, then the right upper chamber of the heart may become enlarged. Check-ups should continue with your doctor. We may suggest a return to our Cardiology

clinic at times. These visits may only be as often as every year or two.

Adults and children with ASD have no restrictions. They should keep on leading healthy, normal lives.

### Treatment

Some ASDs close up on their own and require no further treatment.

The reasons to repair an ASD include the right sided heart becomes enlarged which can lead to heart rhythm problems later on in life. The treatment options will be based on the size and the site of the ASD.

There are two ways to repair an ASD. One way is with a cardiac catheterization. This includes general anesthesia. A catheter is inserted into a large blood vessel in the leg. It goes up into the heart. A device, shaped like a dumbbell, is inserted to plug up the hole. Only certain ASDs can be closed with this device. This often includes staying in the hospital for one night.

Another way to close the ASD is with open-heart surgery. A cardiothoracic surgeon would discuss this with you. This would include staying in the hospital for 3-5 nights.

There are risks and benefits with both the cardiac catheterization and open-heart surgery. Your doctor will discuss this with you. The doctor, nurse or clinic staff can answer any questions.

### Who to Call

Pediatric Cardiology **(608) 263-6420**  
Adult Congenital Heart Disease  
**(608) 890-5700**

If you are a patient receiving care at UnityPoint – Meriter, Swedish American or a health system outside of UW Health, please use the phone numbers provided in your discharge instructions for any questions or concerns.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 2/2020. University of Wisconsin Hospital and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#6864