

Patent Foramen Ovale (PFO)

When a baby is in the womb, there is a trap-door type opening between the top chambers of the heart. This opening is there so the baby's blood that carries the most oxygen can flow to the baby's brain. In most babies, this opening closes soon after birth. It is also common for it not to close until they are older.

If the opening does not close, it is called a patent foramen ovale, or PFO. Studies show that 25-30% of adults have a PFO, and do not know it. It is normal for children and adults. It is **not** felt to be abnormal or a heart defect.

Signs and Symptoms

It is rare for infants and children with a PFO to have any signs. A PFO does not cause a heart murmur. Any blood that flows through the hole is at low pressure, so no extra sounds are heard.

Testing

A PFO is most often found when looking for something else. An ultrasound, called an echocardiogram can show a PFO.

Treatment

No treatment is needed as a PFO rarely causes any problems in young people.

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 © 11/2020. University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#7362