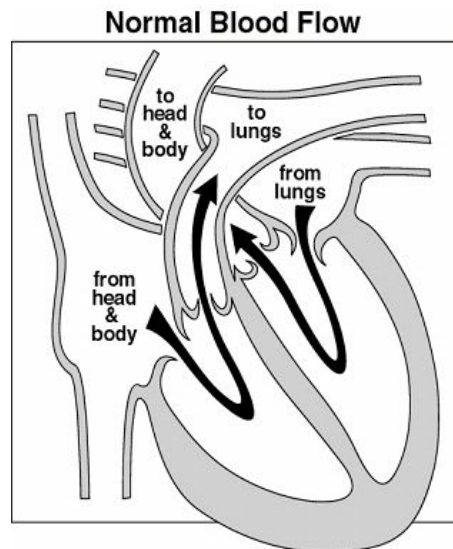


Congenital Heart Disease: Helping Your Baby Grow

Some babies with congenital heart disease have too much blood flowing to the lungs (pulmonary overcirculation). When this happens, breathing takes more work, and eating can be harder.



How it Works

To understand why this happens, it helps to know how blood normally moves through the heart. Blood moves from the right side of the heart to the lungs and from the left side of the heart to the body. Both sides fill and pump at the same time and blood flows from high pressure to low pressure.

For babies with congenital heart disease, pressure on the right side of the heart drops while pressure on the left side stays higher. If there is a hole between the pumping chambers, some blood moves from left to right and then flows to the lungs. These changes often start when your baby is 2–3 weeks old.

How much blood crosses the hole depends on the size of the hole and the pressure in

the lungs. The lungs act like a sponge so when too much blood flows into the lungs, they do not work as well.

Treatment

During treatment, we will track your baby's weight and growth. We may also prescribe medicine to reduce the effects of too much blood flow to the lungs:

- **Lasix** removes extra water from the blood, which helps the lungs work better.
- **Digoxin** helps the heart pump with more force.
- **Enalapril** lowers resistance to blood flow, which helps the heart pump blood to the body.

We may also use formula to help your baby get more calories with less work. If needed, we will show you how to mix formula or enrich breast milk.

When to Call

You may notice feeding takes longer. Your baby may breathe faster, eat less, take more breaks, or sweat while eating. Feeding can change from one day to the next. Call us if you notice changes in how your baby eats or if you feel worried about feeding.

Who to Call

If you have questions, please contact your provider through MyChart or call your provider listed in your After Visit Summary or After Hospital Care Plan. For a list of UW Health Clinics, visit www.uwhealth.org/.