

Congenital Heart Disease: Helping Your Baby Grow

Some infants with congenital heart disease have problems eating and growing due to pulmonary overcirculation. This term describes a problem that results from too much blood flowing to your child's lungs. To better understand this let us review normal blood flow in the heart and lungs.

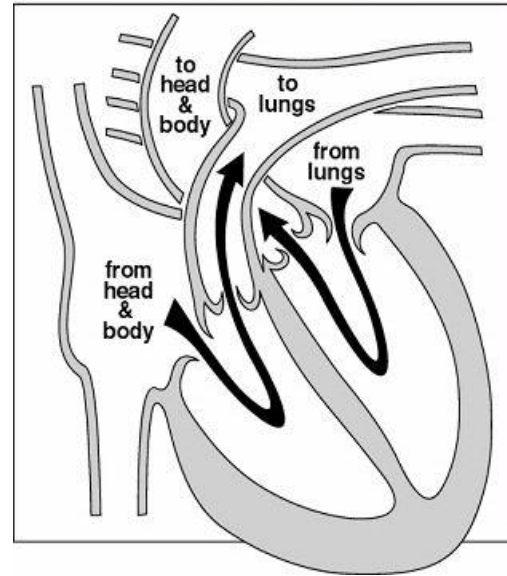
Blood flows from the right side of the heart to the lungs. It flows from the left side of the heart to the body. Both the left and the right side of the heart fill and pump blood at the same time. Blood flows from places of high pressure to places of low pressure. At two or three weeks old, the pressure on the right side of the heart is lower than the pressure on the left. If there is an opening between the left and right pumping chambers, some of the blood from the left will go to the right side. It then flows to the lungs. The amount of blood that flows across the hole will depend on the size of the hole and the pressure in the lungs. The lungs act like a sponge. When too much blood flows into them, they do not work as well.

Concerns and Symptoms

You may notice it takes your infant longer to eat. They may breathe faster, eat less, need to take frequent breaks, or get sweaty while eating. All babies vary from feeding to feeding in how much and how well they eat.

If you notice a change in your baby's eating patterns or are uneasy with their eating, please call us at: (608) 263-6420.

Normal Blood Flow



Treatment

Sometimes we use medicines to lessen the effects of pulmonary overcirculation.

- **Lasix** removes unneeded water from the blood making it easier for the lungs to work.
- **Digoxin** helps the heart be a stronger pump.
- **Enalapril** lessens resistance to blood flow making it easier for the heart to pump blood to the body.

Sometimes we use formula with a higher calorie concentration. A concentrated formula will allow your baby to receive more calories with less work. If this is needed, we will teach you how to mix the formula or enrich your breast milk. We will follow your baby's weight gain as will your baby's doctor.

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 © 5/2019 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#6858