

What exactly is a Murmur?

Some common misunderstandings of what the word “murmur” means:

- A leaky /extra valve
- A hole
- Extra blood vessel
- Just something wrong with the heart
- A flap
- An extra beat
- A narrowing

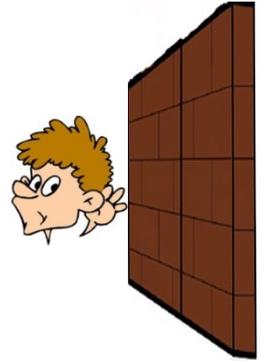
Murmur simply means an extra sound from the heart.

And most often these are just normal extra sounds from a normal heart.

Why does a normal heart make extra sounds (murmurs)?

Let’s compare the heart to the pipes behind the walls of your home. Water flowing through normal pipes creates sounds you hear through your walls. If the pipes are small, if the water runs fast, or if the walls are thin you might hear those sounds easier and more often.

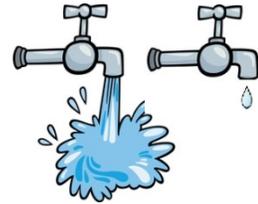
Blood is constantly flowing through the heart. Because **children have smaller hearts that beat faster, and thinner chest walls**, they are more likely to have extra sounds (murmurs) that can be easily heard. Over years normal extra heart sounds become harder to hear as children grow.



Why are normal heart sounds sometimes louder and sometimes quieter?

If you run your water faster the sounds from the pipes become louder, but there’s nothing wrong with the pipes.

With **exercise, fussiness/excitability, dehydration, illness, or anemia** the heart is more active and blood moves through it faster making normal noises can be a bit louder and easier to hear. When your child is well and calm the heart slows down and relaxes making extra sounds quieter.



When might you worry about an extra sound (murmur)?

If the pipes in your home made sounds that were unusual or your water wasn’t running you might be concerned. General Providers will refer you to a Cardiologist when **sounds are unusual to them or your child has a symptom.**

Cardiologists have special training to identify the difference between normal and unusual extra sounds (murmurs). Sometimes simply by talking with you and an exam we can figure out if this is a normal.

If needed an Echocardiogram (ultrasound of the heart) can **look and see if there is abnormality creating this extra sound.** **If the heart is normal then it’s a normal extra sound.**



If the Cardiologist says you have a Normal murmur (a normal extra sound) your regular provider **might send you back to the Cardiologist If:** The murmur starts to **sound different OR there are new symptoms** they think could be related to a heart problem (poor growth, exercise issues, fainting). Since normal extra sounds come and go for years **there is no specific amount of time that we worry about still hearing a normal murmur IF it still sounds the same.**

KEY POINTS:

- **Almost every child will have a murmur heard at some point in their life**
- **They can be first heard at any time**
- **The majority of extra sounds (murmurs) are normal.**
- **May be heard off and on for years**

Make sure you understand what your Cardiologist says your child’s murmur is due to:

If the extra sound is from a normal heart you should specifically call it a “normal murmur”.

If something else is found, explain it to others by calling it by the abnormality’s name and NOT a “murmur”.