

## **Innocent Heart Murmurs in Children**

### **What is a heart murmur?**

A heart murmur is a sound that a doctor hears when listening to the heart with a stethoscope. Normally, the heart makes two sounds (“lub-dub”) as the heart valves close. Sometimes there is also an extra sound between these beats, and this sound is called a *murmur*. It happens because we can sometimes hear blood flowing through the heart and blood vessels. A murmur is not a diagnosis by itself, and cannot be “seen” on an echocardiogram—it is just a sound.

### **What is an innocent murmur?**

An innocent murmur (also called a functional murmur, benign murmur, or physiologic murmur) is a normal sound made by blood flowing through a healthy heart. Many healthy children have innocent murmurs at some point in childhood, and different types of murmurs tend to occur at different ages. About half of all children have an innocent murmur at some point. If your child has an innocent murmur, it means:

- The heart is structurally normal
- The murmur is caused by normal blood flow
- It does not harm the child

### **Why do children have innocent murmurs?**

Children often have thinner chest walls, higher heart rates, and faster blood flow than adults. This can make normal blood flow easier to hear with a stethoscope. Innocent murmurs may come and go, and may be louder in different positions, such as lying down. They can also be louder if a child is sick with a fever, excited, active, or dehydrated.

### **Will my child outgrow it?**

Usually. Most innocent murmurs become quieter or disappear as children grow, but even if the murmur is still heard later, it does not cause problems and does not mean something is wrong. Some people continue to have innocent murmurs into adulthood.

### **Does my child need restrictions?**

No. Children with innocent murmurs can exercise normally and participate in competitive sports. Innocent murmurs do not need any treatment, including no need for antibiotics with dental visits.

### **Does my child need follow-up with a cardiologist?**

In most cases, no. However, if your child’s PCP notices that the murmur has changed and no longer sounds like an innocent murmur, or if your child develops any concerning symptoms, follow-up may be indicated. These symptoms include (but are not limited to):

- Exertional symptoms (symptoms that occur during physical activity), such as chest pain, dizziness or lightheadedness, or unusual shortness of breath
- Unexplained fainting
- Unusual fatigue or sweating
- Poor growth
- Color change, such as turning blue or pale