

# Information on Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) and Congenital Heart Disease

Thank you for your interest in learning more about how Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) can affect those with congenital heart disease (CHD). We share your concerns, and we are committed to the health of all those affected by CHD. Things are changing quickly and recommendations may change based on new data.

## **What is COVID-19?**

COVID-19 is a new disease that causes respiratory illness in people and can spread from person to person. COVID-19 is caused by a new coronavirus that has not previously been seen in humans. This virus was first identified during an investigation into an outbreak in Wuhan, China.

## **What is known about how COVID-19 affects children and adults?**

Information from other countries suggests that children may not be as severely affected by COVID-19 as adults. In China, out of over 2000 children infected, there were 13 critical cases and 1 death. We continue to learn more as data are shared and released. However, older adults and those with cardiovascular disease may be more likely to have severe COVID-19 symptoms and become very ill when infected. This is particularly true for adults with uncontrolled heart conditions such as [congestive heart failure](#), [hypertension \(high blood pressure\)](#), or [coronary artery disease](#), and for those with chronic lung conditions which occur in CHD patients (like [asthma](#) or [pulmonary hypertension](#)).

[Learn more about people with asthma and COVID-19.](#)

## **What is known about how COVID-19 affects those with congenital heart disease?**

Unfortunately, no data on COVID-19 is available at this time on children or adults with [congenital](#) heart disease. Having CHD should not increase the chance of becoming infected. CHD is currently considered a condition that can *potentially* increase the risk of COVID-19 becoming severe, particularly among those who are older and those who are severely affected by their CHD (e.g. have severe congestive heart failure or chronic lung conditions). Having other chronic conditions such as [diabetes](#) may also increase this risk. In other words, people at higher risk for [severe influenza \(flu\) infection](#) are thought to also be at higher risk for severe COVID-19. Talk to your heart doctor if you are unsure whether you are at high risk of severe COVID-19.

[Learn more about people who are at a higher risk of severe illness.](#)

## **What can I do to stay healthy?**

The best way to stay healthy is to prevent infection as much as possible. Washing hands, practicing social distancing (avoiding crowded places and staying 6 feet or further from others when in public), touching your face as little as possible, and staying at home as much as possible are all good practices at the current time, especially for households with a family member with CHD. There are no specific medications or supplements confirmed to prevent or treat COVID-19. However, following general guidelines of eating healthy and getting enough sleep are helpful. It is important to stay up to date on all vaccinations including pneumonia vaccine and influenza.

For those who take medications, the CDC advises asking your pharmacy for extra medication or to order more medication by mail. Consider a 2-week supply of prescription and over the counter medications, food and other essentials. Talk to your doctor if you have concerns about any of your medications. There has been some concern about certain medications worsening COVID-19. The American College of Cardiology, the American Heart Association, and the Heart Failure Society of America recommended on March 17, 2020 that cardiac patients continue all medicines prescribed by their doctor, including ACE-inhibitors and angiotensin receptor blockers.

[Learn more about how to protect yourself and your family.](#)

### **Should I go to work if I or someone in my family has CHD?**

If you are concerned that you may be at high risk for severe COVID-19, it is important to speak with a supervisor and/or occupational health person about your concerns. Employers should be aware that more employees may need to stay at home to care for sick children or other sick family members than is usual in case of a community outbreak. There may be options to telecommute or to request avoiding certain duties as a health precaution.

### **What should I do if I feel like I have symptoms?**

If you develop [symptoms such as fever, cough, and shortness of breath](#), call your primary care provider for instructions for when to seek care or testing, unless your heart doctor has instructed otherwise. Stay at home except to get medical care and separate yourself as much as possible from family and friends.

People with CHD may already experience shortness of breath and have a bluish tint to their skin, lips and fingernails. If any of these symptoms worsen or if you or your family member with CHD begin to have trouble breathing or develop bluish lips or face, chest pain or pressure, confusion, or any other severe or worsened symptoms, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room immediately. Please consult your medical provider for any other symptoms that are severe or concerning.

[Use CDC's COVID-19 Self Checker.](#)

### **All of this is stressing me out....are there any resources to help me cope?**

The outbreak of COVID-19 may be stressful for people. Fear and anxiety about a disease can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions in adults and children. Coping with stress will make you, the people you care about, and your community stronger. Managing risk, fear, and uncertainty in an evolving pandemic is difficult, and maintaining your emotional wellbeing is important. However, there are things you can do to help reduce your stress. Maintain a schedule, even while staying at home. Get exercise, eat healthy foods regularly, and get enough sleep. Additionally, connect with family and friends through phone and video chatting.

If you, or someone you care about, feel overwhelmed with emotions like sadness, depression, or anxiety, or if you feel like you want to harm yourself or others, please call either 911 or the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration's Disaster Distress Helpline: 1-800-985-5990 or text TalkWithUs to 66746 (TTY 1-800-846-8517).

[Learn more about reducing stress in yourself and others.](#)

### **What are some other useful resources?**

More information can be found at:

- Relevant CDC COVID-19 pages:
  - Main COVID-19 page: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>
  - Individuals at High Risk: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/high-risk-complications.html>
  - Children and COVID-19: [https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html#anchor\\_1584387482747](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html#anchor_1584387482747)
  - Pregnancy and COVID-19: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/pregnancy-breastfeeding.html>
- Guidance from the White House, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), and CDC: <https://www.coronavirus.gov/>
- World Health Organization COVID-19 site: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>
- AAP Healthy Children COVID-19 site: <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/chest-lungs/Pages/2019-Novel-Coronavirus.aspx>
- Adult Congenital Heart Association webinar on March 16, 2020 on Coronavirus and the CHD patient: <https://youtu.be/hou2qM1phVQ>
- Sisters By Heart Facebook Live event from March 17, 2020 on Coronavirus and Children with CHD: <https://www.facebook.com/156971814350396/videos/2817193955063709/>
- COVID-19 information from Conquering CHD: <https://www.conqueringchd.org/covid-19-update/>

Check with your local hospital, provider, or health department for more information about COVID-19 in your community.