

Ventricular Septal Defect (VSD)

What is a VSD?

A VSD is an opening or hole (defect). The defect is in the wall (septum) between the heart's two pumping chambers (ventricles). A VSD can vary in shape, size and location. A child can have more than one VSD.

The heart has four chambers.

- The upper two chambers are the atria, and the lower two are the ventricles.
- The right side of the heart takes in blood from the body that is low in oxygen and pumps it to the lungs.
- The left side of the heart takes in blood from the lungs that is high in oxygen and pumps it to the body.

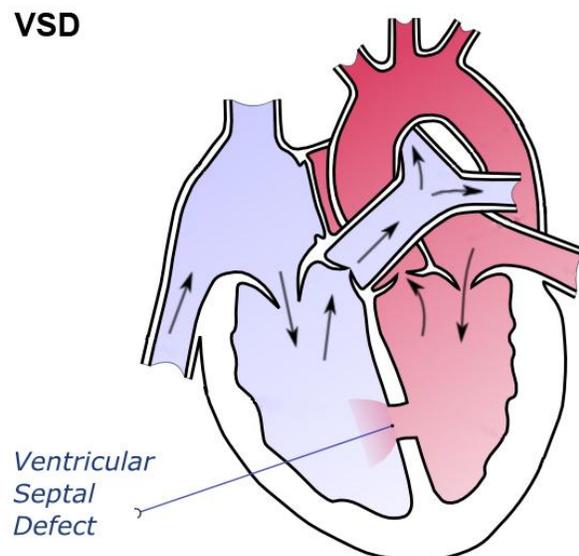
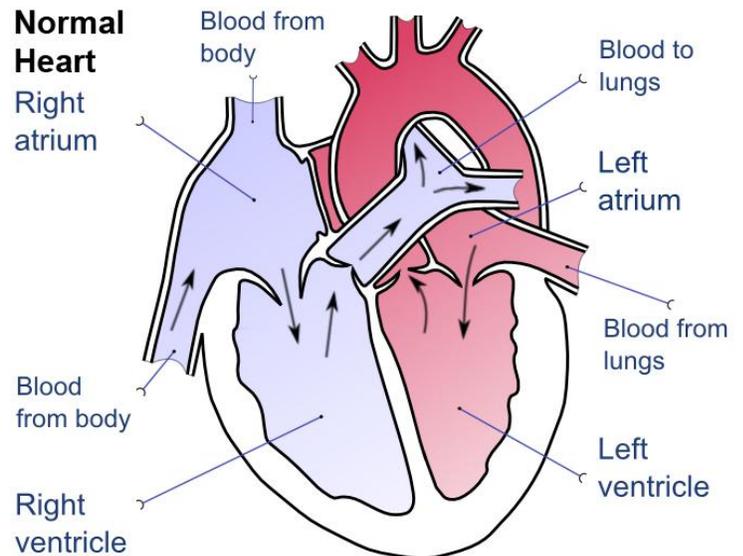
When there is a VSD, the high-oxygen blood from the left side of the heart mixes with low-oxygen blood in the right side of the heart. With a large VSD, this may cause more blood to be pumped to the lungs.

What testing is needed?

Your child will have an ultrasound of the heart. This test is called an echocardiogram. It helps your child's heart doctor see if there is a hole, where it is located, and how big it is.

How does a VSD affect my baby?

Often a baby is diagnosed with a VSD because the doctor hears a heart murmur. Most babies with a VSD function normally. If your baby has any signs listed in the Alerts section on the next page, please call your doctor.



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How is a VSD treated?

Most VSDs close on their own in the first months or years of life. If your baby develops symptoms, there are medicines to help. Surgery may be needed. Your child's heart doctor will talk with you about this. During an open-heart surgery, a patch of fabric or the normal lining around the outside of the heart, called the pericardium is sewn over the VSD to close it completely.

What is the outcome for my child?

The long-term outcome for infants or children with a VSD is excellent. They normally live full lives with no limits on activity. We recommend follow-up with your child's heart doctor before and after the repair of a VSD.

Other helpful websites and organizations

- [Children's Hospital of Wisconsin](#)
- [American Heart Association](#)
- [Congenital Heart Information Network](#)
- [National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute](#)

ALERT: Call your child's doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any questions or concerns or if your child:

- Is working hard to breathe.
- Sweats a lot.
- Is taking longer to eat or eating less.
- Has skin that looks blue or gray and puffy.
- Is more fussy than usual.
- Has special health care needs that were not covered by this information.

This teaching sheet is meant to help you care for your child. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up.