



Heart Murmurs

Reading

Name: _____
Date: _____
Core: _____

You know the sound of your heartbeat: lub-dub, lub-dub. In some people, there's an extra noise that the blood makes as it flows through the heart. It sounds sort of like the noise of water flowing through a hose. This sound is called a murmur. Most murmurs don't mean anything is wrong. But sometimes they are a sign of a problem with the heart.

Depending on a person's age, the heart beats about 60 to 120 times every minute. Each heartbeat is really two separate sounds: lub-dub, lub-dub. Your heart goes "lub" with the closing of the valves that control blood flow from the upper chambers to the lower chambers. Then, as the valves controlling blood going out of the heart close, your heart goes "dub."

A **heart murmur** is a **whooshing sound** between the beats that a doctor hears through a stethoscope. The whoosh is just an extra noise that the blood makes as it flows through the heart. Doctors usually discover murmurs during regular checkups or when kids see the doctor because they're sick.

What Happens If You Have a Murmur? More than half of all children have a heart murmur at some time in their lives and most heart murmurs don't mean anything is wrong. They are caused by blood rushing through the valves in a normal heart and are nothing to worry about.

Even though most murmurs do not mean anything is wrong, sometimes a heart problem can cause a murmur. The heart may have a hole in the septum (the wall separating the left and right ventricles), a heart valve may leak, or a valve may not open all the way. If your doctor thinks your heart murmur could be due to a heart problem, you will need to see a pediatric cardiologist. This kind of doctor knows a lot about children's hearts.

What can you and your doctor do if you have a heart murmur? The doctor will take the information from the tests and exam and determine if your murmur is likely to cause a problem for you. A kid with a heart murmur might need to be careful about getting infections that could travel to the heart. To prevent this, your doctor may prescribe antibiotics for you. The doctor also may prescribe medicine to help the heart squeeze harder, prevent blood clots (bits of thick blood that can block blood vessels), remove extra fluid from the body, or lower your blood pressure.

In some cases, surgery is necessary to fix the problem. Depending on the problem, doctors can patch a hole in the heart, fix a valve, rebuild a blood vessel, or stretch open a blood vessel that's too narrow.

But most of the time, a heart murmur isn't a big problem. And most kids with heart murmurs can run, jump, and play just like everybody else. A heart murmur is simply a sound. It's not always the sign of a heart problem. Usually, it's just your heart whistling while it works.

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- 1) Paragraph 3 describes a heart murmur and says that doctors can detect them using a special tool called a "stethoscope". Based on this statement, what can we infer about heart murmurs?
 - a. They are totally silent, but you can see them with a stethoscope.
 - b. They make a very quiet noise, so you need a special tool to hear them.
 - c. They make a clear, distinct noise you can hear without any special tool.
 - d. They make a loud noise and the stethoscope protects your ears from hearing damage.

- 2) What is the author's message to a child who is diagnosed with a heart murmur?
 - a. Heart murmurs are very common and never pose any danger to kids.
 - b. Most kids with heart murmurs suffer serious health problems unless they see a doctor.
 - c. Heart murmurs are sometimes serious, but most of the time they are harmless and don't affect a kid's life.
 - d. Heart murmurs only affect children and clear up on their own before adulthood.

- 3) With the information in paragraph 6, what is the best definition for "antibiotic"?
 - a. A medicine that fights infection.
 - b. A medicine that prevents blood clots.
 - c. A type of infection that affects children's hearts.
 - d. A type of surgery that fixes heart murmurs.

- 4) Based on the information in paragraphs 2 and 5, which sentence best describes the main role of a "valve" in your heart?
 - a. It makes a "whooshing" sound, so you can hear your heart beat.
 - b. It is a chamber that pumps blood out of the heart to the rest of the body.
 - c. It is the wall that separates the left and right ventricles.
 - d. It controls the flow of blood through the heart.