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THE HEART OF
NEW YORK CITY

Congenital Heart Disease and Family Planning

Congenital heart disease (CHD) is the most common birth defect in the United States. About 40,000 babies are born with heart disease each year. People with a family history of CHD may be more likely to pass it on if they choose to have children. Still, advancements in research and technology are providing adults with CHD with more opportunities to safely have families of their own.

Both male and female adults with congenital heart disease (ACHD) should talk with their ACHD cardiologist to understand the best and safest options when planning a family. These include:

- Birth control options
- Genetic testing
- How pregnancy could affect their heart health
- Safe birthing options

Adults with CHD may benefit from seeing a multidisciplinary team of several medical specialists who work together on treatment decisions. OB-GYNs and maternal-fetal medicine specialists should work with ACHD cardiologists and specialists for ACHD patients.

Pregnancy and congenital heart disease

With proper risk assessment and monitoring, most pregnant ACHD patients can give birth vaginally.

Doctors can detect CHD in babies in utero with a screening known as early fetal echocardiography. This is done around 11-12 weeks gestation. Standard heart screenings are done around 18-20 weeks gestation. This allows ACHD pregnant patients and their care team to plan for how to treat their baby's heart once the child is born.

Support for mental health

Mental health support is an important part of overall care. CHD survivors are more likely to have mental health challenges. Health care professionals should regularly check for signs of depression, anxiety and PTSD before, during and after pregnancy and refer patients to treatment when needed.

[Heart.org/CHD](https://www.heart.org/CHD)



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A Survivor's Story - Victoria Rodriguez

Victoria Rodriguez was 6 years old when she found out she had been born with heart disease. She had open-heart surgery to correct a hole in the upper chamber of her heart and a pulmonary vein that backed up blood into her lungs instead of sending it to the left side of her heart. As an adult, Victoria gave birth naturally to two daughters. Her second child was born with a small hole in her heart. Doctors expect it will close on its own.

