

Heart Defects in New Mexico: *Tricuspid Atresia*



Congenital heart defects (CHDs) are the most common type of birth defect. A child is said to have a CHD when he or she is born with a heart that is not formed normally. As medical care and treatment have advanced, babies with CHD are living longer and healthier lives.

What is New Mexico doing to catch heart defects early?

All birthing facilities in New Mexico are required to check newborns for birth defects, including congenital heart defects (CHDs), such as tricuspid atresia.*

The screen for CHDs, called pulse oximetry, is painless and measures the baby's pulse and the level of oxygen in the baby's blood. Screening performed in the birthing facility before discharge allows immediate referral for follow-up testing. Pulse oximetry alone cannot diagnose a heart defect.

*Parents choosing to forego this screening must sign a waiver.

What are the symptoms of a heart defect?

It's important for parents and caregivers to be able to identify the symptoms of a heart defect. If you notice any of these symptoms, seek medical help immediately.

- Pounding heart
- Weak pulse
- Pale or blue-colored skin, nails, or lips
- Fast or troubled breathing
- Poor feeding
- Very sleepy

Tricuspid Atresia

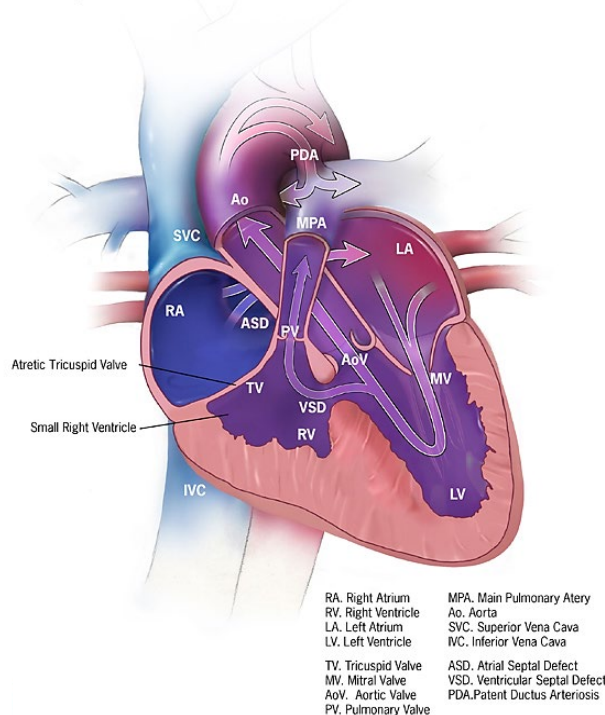
What is tricuspid atresia?

Tricuspid atresia is a heart defect that is present at birth and can be life threatening. Tricuspid atresia occurs when the valve (known as the tricuspid valve) that controls blood flow from the right upper chamber (right atrium) of the heart to the right lower chamber (right ventricle) of the heart does not form at all. This prevents blood from flowing directly from the heart to the lungs (by way of the pulmonary artery) for oxygen and forces blood to use other routes to bypass what would be the tricuspid valve. One of the results of this defect is having an underdeveloped right ventricle and underdeveloped pulmonary artery. Often, babies with tricuspid atresia have other heart defects like a hole between the top heart chambers (atrial septal defect) or a hole between the bottom chambers of the heart (ventricular septal defect). These defects allow oxygen-rich blood to mix with oxygen-poor blood before being pumped to the body.

What can cause tricuspid atresia?

In most cases, the cause of heart defects are unknown. Some known causes include medical conditions of the mother such as diabetes, lupus, rubella infections, or obesity. Smoking, drinking alcohol, or taking certain medications can also increase the risk of a heart defect. Other known causes include alterations to the genes or chromosomes during the development of the fetus.

Tricuspid Atresia



Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities: <https://www.cdc.gov/heart-defects/about/tricuspid-atresia.html>

How is tricuspid atresia treated?

Each case of tricuspid atresia is different, so it is important to discuss treatment options with a pediatric cardiologist. When it is necessary, surgery will occur prior to the baby leaving the hospital. Surgery typically results in a very good quality of life for most children.

How common is tricuspid atresia in New Mexico?

Tricuspid atresia is not common in New Mexico. There are approximately 2 babies born with this condition each year in New Mexico.

