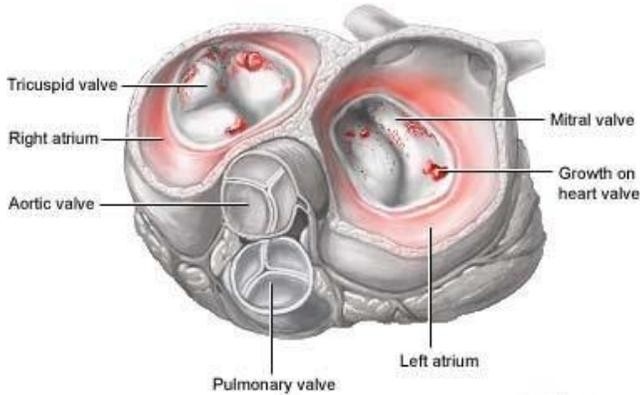


Preventing Infective Endocarditis

Infective endocarditis is an infection of the heart chambers or valves



ADAM.

What is Infective Endocarditis?

It is an inflammation caused by an infection of the inside lining of the heart.

What causes Infective endocarditis?

It is caused by bacteria, which get into the bloodstream and settle and multiply in the heart. The infection is NOT common. Not all bacteria cause infection. In most cases the body's immune system destroys bacteria before they do harm. However, some kinds of heart conditions and repairs result in the blood flowing less smoothly through the heart. This means that bacteria in the blood stick to rough patches which are more common in the hearts of children with congenital heart problems.

Note: Not all children with Congenital Heart Defects are at risk for Infective Endocarditis.

Ask your cardiologist.

How do bacteria get into the bloodstream?

Bacteria enter the bloodstream in different ways. One way is during surgery. The most common way is through teeth or gums that are decayed and infected. Bacteria can also get into the blood when teeth are removed or cleaned at the dentist.

A tooth has three layers:

- A hard, enamel layer on the outside
- Dentin, the main part of the tooth
- Pulp at the centre of the tooth – including nerves and blood vessel

Because all blood circulates through the heart, any bacteria that enter blood vessels in the pulp will be carried to the heart. Bacteria can also enter blood when teeth are drilled or taken out and the pulp is open.



How to prevent Infective endocarditis?

Keep your child's teeth and gums healthy. As soon as your child has teeth, clean and floss regularly, and take your child to the dentist every 6 months. A pamphlet called "All children can grow up cavity free with good dental care" is available in the family resource library.

<http://library.cw.bc.ca/catalogue/12122/default.aspx>

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The cardiologist or surgeon may suggest that your child take antibiotics before some surgeries or dental treatments. The type and timing of the antibiotic doses are important.

The idea is to have lots of antibiotic in the blood at the time of the procedure. The antibiotic helps destroy any bacteria in the blood stream before they reach the heart.

Always tell dentists and other health professionals about your child's risk of infective endocarditis. Please give them the information regarding when to use antibiotics located on the pocket card "Prevention of Infective Endocarditis" (provided by the cardiology department).

What will happen if my child gets infective endocarditis?

Your child can be very sick from infective endocarditis requiring hospitalization and intravenous antibiotics for weeks. The infection may cause permanent damage to the valves in the heart requiring close follow up with a pediatric cardiologist.

PLEASE REMEMBER IT IS VERY IMPORTANT TO LET ALL OF YOUR HEALTH PROVIDERS KNOW ABOUT YOUR CHILD'S RISK OF INFECTIVE ENDOCARDITIS

If you have any questions about this information, please call the cardiology nurse clinician at:



604-875-2345 local 7877 or

Toll free 1-888-300-3088 local 7877

Source: Wilson et al. (2007). Prevention of infective endocarditis: Guidelines from the American Heart Association. *Circulation*, 116, 1736-1754.

It's good to ask!

Developed by the health care professionals of the Cardiology Department with assistance from the Patient Experience Department

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