

Blue spells and your child

It is normal for babies to have blue skin on their hands, feet, or around their eyes and lips. This often happens when children are cold or in the bath. Children with certain heart problems can have a different kind of “blue spell” in which the child turns blue on their chest, their whole face, and inside the mouth. These spells are also known as “tet spells” or “hypercyanotic spells”. These spells can be scary for parents and caregivers.

During a blue spell children may:

- Be irritable
- Suddenly feel uncomfortable
- Begin to breathe faster and deeper
- Turn blue (not just around the mouth or hands/feet)
- Become excessively tired or even faint

What causes blue spells?

The cause of blue spells is a sudden decrease in the amount of blood going to the lungs. The children most likely to have a blue spell are those with Tetralogy of Fallot (a form of congenital heart disease). However, blue spells may occur in children with other forms of heart disease in which blood flow to the lungs is reduced.

What should you do if your child has a blue spell?

Do not panic! You will want to be able to comfort your child.

For babies:

- Place your baby on their back
- Push the baby's knees up into their belly

For older children:

- Place your child on their side, bringing their knees to the chest.
- Older children may squat during a blue spell. This is their way of bringing their knees to chest on their own.

Make sure you can see your child's face to watch for color changes and check the level of alertness.

Phone cardiology on call at 604-875-2161 if:

- this is your child's first blue spell
- if your child has blue spells more often than they normally do



If a blue spell continues despite intervention, or your child is limp or unresponsive call 911.