



HEART CONDITIONS

There are many different heart conditions that can affect Australian children such as Heart Murmurs, Arrhythmias, Congenital heart disease, Pericarditis and High blood pressure.

Each condition needs to be treated differently under the professional guidance of medical and allied health professionals such as an accredited exercise physiologist.

For full information on heart conditions please contact The Heart Foundation.

Before exercising always check with an Accredited Exercise Physiologist.

Why it's important to exercise

There are many different heart conditions and it is important that you seek expert help before encouraging your child to move more. No matter what type of exercise, there are many different benefits to exercise for children with heart conditions.

For example, exercise can:

- Help your child develop exercise habits that he or she will keep for life
- Improve their overall health and wellbeing
- Increase bone mineral density
- Reduce the risk of atherosclerosis
- Reduce the risk of hypertension
- Help them gain self-confidence and improve mental health

Things to remember:

- It would be best to avoid contact sports and activities as this may put undue stress on some children.
- Monitoring of heart rate, blood pressure and oxygen levels should be performed before, during (if required) and after exercise by a professional to make sure everything is on track.
- A pre-screening and medical history check should be conducted before any commencing and new exercise.
- Vigorous exercise should be avoided without medical clearance (e.g. sprinting for long distance).

Types of exercise recommended:

- Try and include non-contact sports and activities at a mild to moderate exertion rate. A few good examples of this would be bike riding, swimming and going out for walks with the family.
- Combine supervised aerobic and strength training 2 to 3 times a week for 40 minutes.
- Flexibility is also important, so try and encourage light stretching before and after physical activity.

References:

1. Paediatric cardiac rehabilitation in congenital heart disease: a systemic review, Cardiology in the Young 2012
2. Exercise in children with common congenital heart lesions: Balancing benefits with risks, Journal of Paediatrics and Child Health 2013