



## How to Talk to Parents About Congenital Cardiac Care for Children with Heart Defects

Children with heart defects need to see a pediatric cardiologist regularly. As a primary care physician, you can help make sure they do.

Specifically, it's important to explain to parents and caregivers why children with heart defects need to see a pediatric cardiologist — and to refer children who aren't seeing one. When you do, you'll help children with heart defects stay healthy.

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### Use these talking points to help start the conversation.

#### 1 Explain why children with heart defects need to see a pediatric cardiologist



**“Heart defects are a lifelong condition, even after heart surgery. Heart defects can also lead to complications over time — but they may not cause symptoms right away. That's why children with heart defects need to see a pediatric cardiologist regularly.”**

If a heart defect isn't causing any symptoms, parents and caregivers may not realize the child needs to continue to see a pediatric cardiologist. Explain that symptoms can develop over time and that pediatric cardiologists can catch problems early to help make sure children stay healthy.

## 2 Describe what a pediatric cardiologist does



**“A pediatric cardiologist is a doctor who's trained to treat heart problems in children. They know how to tell if a heart problem is getting worse and how to help children with heart defects stay healthy.”**

Some parents and caregivers may not understand why children with heart defects need to see another physician, so it's important to explain what a pediatric cardiologist does. Emphasize that pediatric cardiologists know more about heart defects in children than anyone else—including which medicines or procedures children may need. Pediatric cardiologists can also help parents and caregivers understand things like which sports are safe for children and how to choose healthy foods.

## 3 Tell parents and caregivers you can make a referral



**“I can refer your child to a pediatric cardiologist to make sure they're getting the care they need.”**

Navigating the health care system can be overwhelming and stressful for patients and their families—so reassure parents and caregivers that they're not alone. Tell them you can help them find a pediatric cardiologist.

## Talk to teens about transitioning to adult care!

People with heart defects need lifelong congenital cardiac care, but many people never transition from a pediatric cardiologist to an adult congenital cardiologist. That's why it's especially important to talk with teens about transitioning to adult congenital cardiac care—and to make referrals for older teens and young adults who need them. You could say:

**“Your pediatric cardiologist may only see you up to a certain age. When you're old enough, it's important to start seeing an adult congenital cardiologist. They can help make sure you stay healthy as you get older.”**



To learn more, check out:

- [aap.org/CHDcare](https://aap.org/CHDcare)
- [cdc.gov/heartdefects](https://cdc.gov/heartdefects)
- [chphc.org](https://chphc.org)



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