

# Congenital Heart Defect Awareness



**Congenital heart defects (CHDs) are heart problems that are present from birth.**

**CHDs are the most common type of congenital condition.**  
Approximately 1% of infants born in the United States have a CHD.

## Critical and Noncritical CHDs

Critical CHDs are potentially life-threatening and often require surgery before age 1.

Noncritical CHDs are not immediately life-threatening, but may still lead to serious health problems.

25% of CHDs are critical.



## According to the CDC, Life Expectancy With a CHD

**69%**

of people with a **critical** CHD live to age 18.

**95%**

of people with a **noncritical** CHD live to age 18.

## CHD Diagnosis

CHDs are frequently diagnosed within the first year of life. Still, some may not be diagnosed until childhood or adulthood.

**Diagnosis may include:**

- A physical exam
- Genetic testing
- Heart tests

A fetal echocardiography at 18 to 24 weeks of pregnancy can diagnose many CHDs before birth.

About 4 out of 10 CHDs are now diagnosed before birth.



## Causes of CHDs

The cause of CHDs is often unknown.

**CHDs may be more likely due to:**

- Diabetes or gestational diabetes during pregnancy
- Genetics
- Exposure to smoke during pregnancy
- Use of certain medications during pregnancy

**Want to know more about congenital heart defects?  
Find a pediatric cardiology specialist  
at [weillcornell.org/doctors](http://weillcornell.org/doctors)**