

# Children's cardiology outpatient clinic

## Information for patients, parents and guardians

Your child has been asked to attend the children's cardiology outpatient clinic. Cardiology is the area of medicine which takes care of the heart.

Your child may have been referred to the clinic for a number of different reasons. If you are unsure of the reason you will have the opportunity to ask during your appointment.

Whether this is your child's first visit or you have attended the clinic before, this leaflet provides information to help you prepare for the appointment and know exactly what to expect.

### Preparing for the appointment

Your child can eat and drink as normal before their appointment. They should continue to take all of their usual medications.

We try our very best to keep on time with our appointments, but sometimes you may experience a wait to be seen. We have some children's activities available in our waiting room, including books, colouring and toys.

Your child will need to get undressed several times so it's a good idea for them to wear clothes that are easy to take off.

If possible bring another adult with you to the appointment. It can be helpful to have someone else there when you are hearing medical information.

### What to bring

- appointment letter
- list of medication your child is taking
- your child's health record
- list of questions you may want to ask
- spare nappy and feed for your baby
- favourite book or toy
- drink and snack

### What to expect

If you are arriving by car, please remember our car parks can get very busy, so it's a good idea to allow plenty of time to find a space. You may wish to consider getting a lift or coming by public transport. Your appointment may take several hours.

When you arrive you will be checked in at the reception desk and invited to sit in the waiting area. A member of staff will measure your child's height and weight, and may also check their oxygen levels via a small probe attached to their finger or toe.

Your child may then be called to have an electrocardiogram and/or an echocardiogram which are described below. Afterwards you and your child will be called in to see a doctor.

Often we have more than one clinic running at once. This may mean that someone who arrived after you might be seen first because they are attending a different clinic.

### Helping your child keep still

For some of the tests your child may need to try and stay still. They might find this easier if you bring something with you which will help distract them, such as a drink, snack or favourite book or toy.

### Electrocardiogram (ECG)

In one room an electrocardiogram, also known as 'ECG' may be performed. This is a tracing of the electrical activity of your child's heart. This five minute test is not painful and does not have any side effects. The ECG may be performed by a male or female member of staff.

Your child will need to remove their clothes from the waist up and will be covered up appropriately. They will need to lie down on a couch; you can sit or lie down with them if they are anxious. Stickers (called electrodes) will be placed on their arms, legs and chest. These stickers are then connected to the ECG machine.

To record the heart's electrical activity your child needs to stay as still as possible. When the tracing has been printed the stickers will be removed and your child can get dressed. You will then return to the waiting room.

### **Echocardiogram**

In a different room an echocardiogram, also known as an 'echo', may be performed. This is a scan that uses sound waves (ultrasound) to produce pictures of the heart to check its structure and function. This test is not painful and does not have any side effects. The echo may be performed by a male or female member of staff and takes between ten and 30 minutes.

Your child will need to remove their clothes from the waist up and will be covered up appropriately. They will need to lie down on a couch on their left hand side, and you can sit or lie down with them if they are anxious. Three stickers (called electrodes) will be placed on their chest, followed by an ultrasound probe covered with a small amount of gel. The probe will be moved to different positions to allow us to take pictures of the heart.

To take the pictures your child will need to stay as still as possible. When we have taken all of the pictures your child can get dressed. You will then return to the waiting room.

### **Seeing the doctor**

All children who attend the cardiology outpatient's clinic will be called in to see a doctor. Sometimes the echo scan is performed by the doctor when you go in to see them. Your appointment letter will usually give the name of your child's consultant, though you will not always have the opportunity to meet them at the appointment, and may see a registrar who works with the consultant instead. The registrar will always review your child's case with their consultant.

The doctor will talk to you and your child about why you have come to the clinic, discuss any results and will explain what, if anything, will happen next.

Some children come to the cardiology clinic once and are then discharged, meaning they do not need to come back. Others may need to come back at another time to be reviewed. The doctor will discuss this with you.

### **New diagnosis**

If your child is diagnosed with a heart condition the doctor will explain what this means. You will receive some written information about the condition too. For further information and support please ask a member of staff at your appointment to put you in touch with one of our specialist cardiac nurses.

### **Future appointments**

The doctor may arrange for your child to have other hospital appointments at a different time. For information on other tests please have a look at our website [www.uhs.nhs.uk/childrenscardiac](http://www.uhs.nhs.uk/childrenscardiac) where a range of factsheets are available.

If you need a translation of this document, an interpreter or a version in large print, Braille or on audiotape, please telephone **023 8120 4688** for help.

[www.uhs.nhs.uk/childrenshospital](http://www.uhs.nhs.uk/childrenshospital)

Version 2. Published June 2019. Due for review June 2022. 1518