

## **Atrial Septal Defect (ASD)**

### **What is an ASD?**

An ASD is an opening or hole (defect) in the wall (septum) between the heart's two upper chambers (atria). An ASD can vary in shape, size and location. A child can have more than one ASD.

- The heart has four chambers. The upper two chambers are the atria, and the lower two are the ventricles.
- The right side of the heart takes in blood from the body that is low in oxygen and pumps it to the lungs.
- The left side of the heart takes in blood from the lungs that is high in oxygen and pumps it to the body.

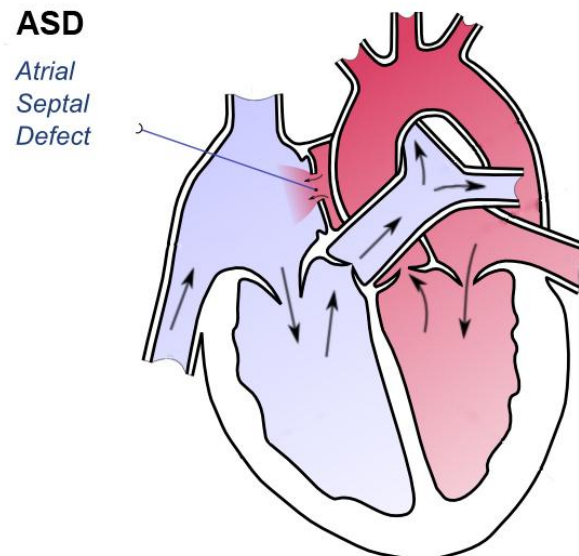
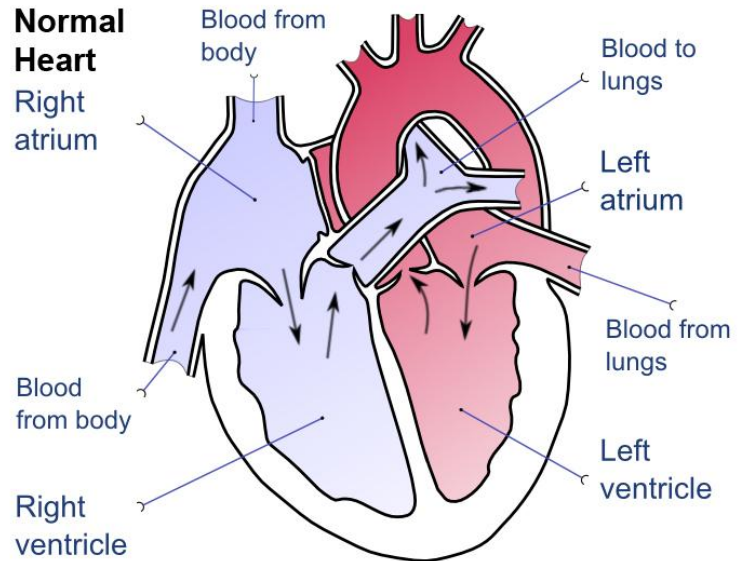
When there is an ASD, the high-oxygen blood from the left side of the heart mixes with low-oxygen blood in the right side of the heart. With a large ASD, this may cause more blood to be pumped to the lungs.

### **What tests are needed?**

Your child will have an ultrasound of the heart. This is called an echocardiogram. It helps your child's heart doctor see if there is a hole, where it is, and how big it is.

### **How does an ASD affect my baby?**

Often a baby is diagnosed with an ASD because the doctor hears a heart murmur. Most babies with an ASD function normally. If your baby has any signs listed in the Alerts section on the next page, please call your doctor.



© 2008, Manco Capac

## How is an ASD treated?

Some ASDs will close on their own. If your baby develops symptoms, there are medicines to help. If the ASD is large, it can be closed with:

- Open-heart surgery.
- Cardiac catheterization. This uses a device that is inserted into the opening to close it.

Your child's heart doctor will talk with you about these options.

## What is the outcome for my child?

The long-term outcome for infants or children with an ASD is excellent. They normally live full lives with no limits on activity. We recommend follow-up with your child's heart doctor before and after the repair of an ASD.

## Other helpful websites and organizations

- [Children's Hospital of Wisconsin](#)
- [American Heart Association](#)
- [Congenital Heart Information Network](#)
- [National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute](#)

**ALERT:** Call your child's doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any questions or concerns or if your child:

- Is working hard to breathe.
- Is taking longer to eat or eating less.
- Has skin that looks blue or gray and puffy.
- Is more fussy than usual.
- Sweats a lot.
- Has special health care needs that were not covered by this information.

**This teaching sheet is meant to help you care for your child. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up.**