

Supraventricular Tachycardia (SVT)

What is Supraventricular Tachycardia (SVT)?

Special cells in the heart create electrical impulses that make the heart beat. The heart rhythm stays normal when these impulses follow the normal electrical pathway of the heart. When the impulse does not follow the normal electrical pathway, the heart rhythm will not be normal. This is what happens in SVT. With SVT, the heart beats faster than it should.

How does it affect my child?

- Infants with SVT may breathe faster than normal. They may seem more fussy or sleepy. It also may take longer to feed your baby.
- Toddlers and older children may tell you their hearts are beating too fast. They may also feel dizzy, light-headed, or weak. They may complain of chest pain or upset stomach.

What tests will be needed?

- An electrocardiogram (EKG) is done to record the electrical activity of the heart.
- Special devices may be used to monitor your child's heart rhythm over a longer period.

How is it treated?

- Your child's doctor or nurse will explain things that your child may do to slow the heart rate. These are called vagal maneuvers. Your child may be told to:
 - Blow on a straw or on the thumb.
 - Push as if having a bowel movement.
 - Do a head stand with a parent's help.
- If your child has frequent episodes, your health care provider may suggest:
 - Daily medicine to keep SVT under control.

OR

 - A procedure called catheter ablation to treat the SVT.

ALERT: If you are concerned about how your child looks, call 911. Call your child's doctor, nurse, or clinic if your child:

- Is having an episode of SVT and you are not sure what to do.
- Is having an episode of SVT that won't stop.
- 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.