

ALEXANDRIA CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Health Information for Staff - Congenital Heart Defect

Your student has an alert on PowerSchool for Congenital Heart Defect. This is a health condition of which you should be aware. The description of this problem and emergency care are stated below. Please make sure that this information is available to substitute teachers and other grade level teachers who may be supervising or working with this student. This information is confidential and should only be shared on a “need to know” basis.

Description of Condition:

CONGENITAL HEART DEFECT

Congenital heart defects develop in fetuses early in pregnancy, causing one abnormality or a combination of abnormalities in the structure of the heart. Some of the more common defects are:

- holes in the walls between the heart's chambers
- abnormal valves
- abnormalities in the blood vessels entering or leaving the heart

About 8 out of every 1,000 newborns have congenital heart defects, which can range from mild to severe. Some may cause serious symptoms at birth, requiring intensive hospital care. Other defects may go undiagnosed until the teen or even adult years.

What do I look for:

Most kids and teens with simple heart defects don't require any special care at school. Those with more complicated heart defects, however, may show signs that require attention, such as:

- rapid breathing or shortness of breath
- bluish coloring of the skin (cyanosis)
- chest discomfort

Students with congenital heart defects may:

- tire easily or want to avoid activities that require a lot of exertion
- have activity restrictions
- need to carry a water bottle to stay hydrated or stay indoors on hot days
- need extra time to go to and from classes
- need to go the bathroom a lot if they're taking diuretic medication
- have bluish skin coloring due to low oxygen levels
- need to use supplemental oxygen
- need to go to the school nurse for medications
- miss class time to see cardiologists or other medical professionals
- have developmental delays or learning problems

What do I do?

Check with your student's parents or guardians to learn about the nature of the heart condition and any effects on learning and school activities.

If a student with a congenital heart defect misses class time for doctor's visits or hospitalizations, allow extra time for assignments and provide make-up work if appropriate. Most kids and teens with congenital heart defects can fully participate in most physical and extracurricular activities and should be encouraged to do so.

Additional Information:

<http://kidshealth.org/parent/classroom/factsheet/heart-defects-factsheet.html>