Talking to your heart child and siblings about their hearts
What is the Heart’s Job

Easy, child-friendly facts when explaining the job of the heart

• My heart is the size of my fist – it grows with me!

• The main job of the heart is to pump blood through the body
  • Once the body uses the oxygen it sends the blood back to the heart - that’s the BLUE blood
  • The heart pumps blood to the lungs to get more oxygen to send back out to the body – that’s the RED blood

• The heart is made up of 4 main rooms called chambers

• My heart has 4 little doors called valves that keep the blood flowing ONE WAY
This drawing shows how blood flows through the heart.

**Color Me:**
The areas of the heart with more oxygen are labeled with an "R". Color these areas RED.

The areas of the heart with less oxygen are labeled with a "B". Color these areas BLUE.
The Heart House

The heart has:
4 ROOMS (Chambers)
4 DOORS (Valves)
4 BIG HALLWAYS (Vessels)
4 SMALL HALLWAYS (Vessels)

THE ROOMS (Chambers)
The heart has 2 small rooms:
The Right Atrium is the room to the right.
The Left Atrium is the room to the left.
The blood coming back from the body enters the right atrium.
The blood coming back from the lungs enters the left atrium.

The heart has 2 large rooms:
The Right Ventricle is the room to the right.
The Left Ventricle is the room to the left.
The Right Ventricle pumps blood to the lungs, so the blood can get oxygen.
The Left Ventricle pumps blood with the oxygen to the whole body.

THE DOORS (Valves)
All of the hearts' 4 doors only open one way.
The Tricuspid Valve is the door between the Right Atrium and Right Ventricle.
The Pulmonic Valve is the door between the Right Ventricle and Pulmonary Artery.
The Mitral Valve is the door between the Left Atrium and Left Ventricle.
The Aortic Valve is the door between the Left Ventricle and the Aorta.

THE HALLWAYS (Vessels)
There are 2 big and 4 small entering hallways:
The Superior Venacava is the big hallway that brings blood back from the head and top part of the body.
The Inferior Venacava is the big hallway that brings blood back from the lower part of the body.
The 4 Pulmonary Veins are the smaller hallways that collect blood from the lungs and sends it to the Left Atrium.

There are 2 big exiting hallways:
The Aorta sends blood to the whole body.
The Pulmonary Artery sends blood to the lungs.
How to Talk about CHD

- Congenital Heart Defect = A problem with your heart when you were born
- We don’t know why it happens
- You can’t catch it or give it to someone else
- Nobody’s fault
How to Talk about CHD

• Answer child honestly if she asks about her scars/medications

• Start the conversation by asking her if she knows why she has those scars, or takes those medications, or goes to see extra doctors

• Use Beads of Courage, scrapbooks, photos to help tell the story

• Use your resources! Talk with clinic team during your appointments and look for transition worksheets in the waiting areas!
I like me!

Kindergarten to third grade

My heart doctor’s (Cardiologist, kahr-dee-ol-uh-jist) name is ____________________.

When I am sick or hurt, I go to __________________ hospital.

I come to visit my heart doctor because ________________________________.

I am allergic to ________________________________.

I am really good at ________________________________.

I am great at taking medicine.
I take my medicine in the: Morning  Afternoon  Bedtime

One of my medicines is ________________________________.

When I grow up, I want to be a ________________________________.
All about me!

Fourth or fifth grade

My name is __________________ and I am ______ years old. If you know me, then you know that I am great at ____________________. You might not know when you meet me, but I also have a heart condition called _____________________.

That means my heart works differently than most people. I take care of my heart in three ways:

1. ____________________
2. ____________________
3. ____________________

I eat healthy foods. My favorites are:

• ____________________

I am allergic to ____________________.

My biggest question for my cardiologist is ____________________.

I take ______ medicines. My medicines are called:

• ____________________
• ____________________
• ____________________

The most important thing I want my cardiologist to know about me is ____________________.

I get fun exercise by playing my favorite outside games. My favorite games are:

• ____________________

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Helping Kids Cope

• Spend quality, **individual time** with each child

• Try to keep a normal **routine**

• **Communicate** with your child’s school and parents of other children as appropriate

• **Share information** with your children according to how much she/he wants to know

• **Ask questions.** Find out if your child is treated differently by friends, neighbors, teachers. Help him learn to talk to others about your heart child.

• Help children **express feelings** or concerns – art, play, friends
• Not their fault!

• Cannot “catch” heart defect from child with the defect

• Be specific about the heart problem, don’t just say, “the baby is sick/not feeling well”

• Explain purpose of medical equipment

• Reassure them his/her own heart is working well
Siblings

- Keep their routine as normal as possible
- Let siblings decide how much they want to be involved in caring for the heart child – also allow them time to just be a kid
- Acknowledge sacrifices siblings make
- Help siblings identify a summer camp or special hobby
Resources for Siblings

What About Me? When Brothers and Sisters Get Sick (Peterkin, 1992)


A Place to Grow (Bloom, 2002)

Magnificent, Marvelous Me! - a workbook for siblings [www.artwithheart.org](http://www.artwithheart.org)

I Know I Made It Happen: A gentle book about feelings (Blackburn, 1990)

The Invisible String (Patrice Karst, 2000) a story about separation

*Talk to a Child Life Specialist or a counselor for additional ideas*
Cardiac Specific Resources

• Kid-friendly information about the heart
  www.childrensheartinstitute.org & http://kidshealth.org

• The Heart: The Questions and Answers Book for Kids By J. Willis Hurst and J. Willis Hurst (elementary, middle school)

• Talk to a Child Life Specialist or a counselor for additional ideas
**General Medical Resources**

*Franklin Goes to the Hospital* By S. Jennings. (preschool, elementary)
Franklin the Turtle has to go to the hospital for an operation because he cracked his shell. The book explains the hospital procedure well and addresses the fears children have about the doctor and hospitals.

*Pooh Plays Doctor* By K.W. Zoehfeld.. (toddlers and preschoolers)
Good simple intro to common items.

Helps children and their families with the initial procedures when hospitalized.
Rita Goes to the Hospital  By Martine Davison. (preschool, elementary)
With the help of friendly staff members, Rita enjoys her visit to the hospital to have her tonsils taken out. Great explanation of what to expect.

It’s Okay to Be Different (Parr, 2001)