



Heart Kids South Africa - CHD Fact Sheet

Congenital Heart Disease is Common. Congenital Heart Disease is Serious:

- Congenital Heart Disease (CHD) consists of problems with the heart's structure that are present at birth with potential lifelong implications. CHD is the most common birth defect impacting approximately 1 in 100 live births.
- Approximately 9 900 infants in South Africa are born with CHD each year.
- 25 - 30 children are born with a congenital heart defect in South Africa everyday.
- Only 12 of the 25 - 30 will be diagnosed.
- 8 children die or are disabled due to a congenital heart defect each day in South Africa.
- There is no cure for CHD.
- CHD is the leading cause of birth defect related deaths.
- Approximately 25% of children born with CHD will need life-saving intervention in the first weeks and months of life.
- In South Africa only 40% of children needing medical intervention for their CHD's receive it.
- International figures state that we should have at least 88 paediatric cardiologists instead of our current 23

What we need to do as a CHD Community

(extract from Optimal paediatric cardiac services in South Africa – what do we need? Statement of the Paediatric Cardiac Society of South Africa)

Most children with congenital heart disease have a good outcome if treated appropriately, however the majority of children with heart disease in South Africa do not receive appropriate care. This is related to serious deficiencies in the mechanisms and training for early detection as well as a major shortage of skilled personnel to care for these children at all levels. Most public sector hospitals are unable to cope with the number of patients requiring surgery, mainly due to inadequate theatre time allocation and intensive care facilities. Key interventions to address these deficiencies include:

- Strategies to improve both the training and the retention of all professionals involved in the care of congenital heart disease.

- Programmes to increase awareness of both congenital and acquired heart disease in children among health care personnel.
- Ensuring appropriate infrastructure and equipment designed for children with congenital heart disease are available.
- Development of congenital heart surgery as an independent subspecialty with dedicated resources and personnel.
- Dedicated intensive care facilities for paediatric heart surgery. In addition, development of appropriate patterns of referral, stimulation of research and positive private-public partnerships are all necessary to ensure that appropriate care is delivered.