



People with **congenital heart defects** face challenges that evolve over time.

Recognizing special needs beyond medical care is important for children and adults living with congenital heart defects (CHD), according to the American Heart Association.



Psychological Care

People born with heart defects may experience psychological and social challenges from infancy through adulthood.

- Children with more complex CHDs are five times more likely to get an anxiety diagnosis in their lifetime compared to children without CHD.
- For adults with CHD, the rate of experiencing a mood or anxiety disorder is about 50%, compared to about 30% for adults in the general population.
- The AHA advocates for mental health assessments and support to be part of comprehensive care for all people with CHD, not just in some circumstances.



Social Determinants of Health

Disparities driven by social determinants of health limit access to the lifelong specialty care needed by people living with CHDs.

- Specialty care services are concentrated in urban areas, making access difficult for survivors in rural or smaller communities and those without transportation or flexible work schedules.
- Certain communities may have limited programs for home monitoring and visitation as well as nutrition, growth and cognitive development (such as school-based outreach).
- Fewer than 500 board-certified specialists in adult congenital heart disease support the growing number of adults with CHD in the U.S., and they are primarily located in urban areas.



Transitioning to Adulthood

Children with CHDs need special attention to successfully transition to adult-oriented health care.

- Young people living with CHDs may not seek care as they become adults until they are facing a health crisis.
- Extended time without routine care can have a significant impact on long-term health and quality of life.
- A better understanding of transition needs and barriers is needed to minimize worsening health disparities for people with low socioeconomic status and those from historically underresourced communities.

Sources:

- As people born with congenital heart defects now live longer, challenges evolve over time (<https://bit.ly/3EcFhmt>)
- Psychological Outcomes and Interventions for Individuals With Congenital Heart Disease: A Scientific Statement From the American Heart Association (<https://www.ahajournals.org/doi/10.1161/JAHA.122.025278>)
- Addressing Social Determinants of Health and Mitigating Health Disparities Across the Lifespan in Congenital Heart Disease: A Scientific Statement From the American Heart Association <https://www.ahajournals.org/doi/10.1161/JAHA.122.025358>)
- Advances in Managing Transition to Adulthood for Adolescents With Congenital Heart Disease: A Practical Approach to Transition Program Design: A Scientific Statement From the American Heart Association (<https://www.ahajournals.org/doi/10.1161/JAHA.122.025278>)

The Children's Heart Foundation and the American Heart Association are proud to join forces to raise awareness and advance lifesaving research for congenital heart defects.

