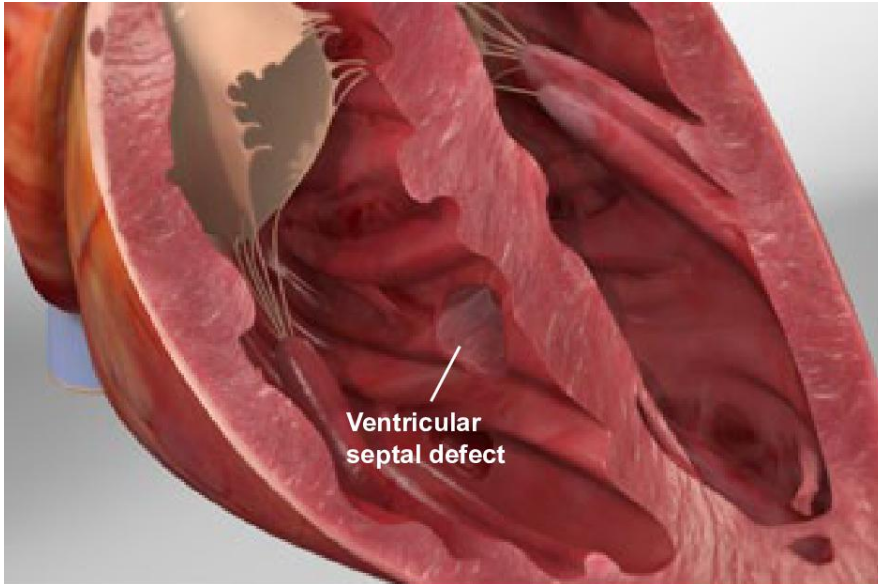




Ventricular Septal Defect (VSD)



Overview

This common heart problem is present at birth. It's a hole in the wall between the heart's two lower chambers. These chambers are called the "ventricles," and the wall between them is called the "septum." The hole lets oxygen-rich blood flow back to the lungs, instead of out to the body where it's needed.

Causes and Risk Factors

This defect forms during the heart's development when the lower chambers don't divide completely. In most cases of VSD, we're not sure why this happens.

Symptoms

VSDs can range in size from small to large. Symptoms depend on the size of the opening. A small VSD may not cause any symptoms. But a larger one may cause fatigue, sweating and rapid breathing. Breathing may be heavy or congested. A baby with a VSD may have feeding problems, and may gain weight slowly. If a medium or large VSD is not treated, it may lead to other heart problems.

Treatment

Treatment depends on your needs. Some small defects don't need treatment. Others can be managed with medications and proper nutrition. Over time, some small defects can close on their own. A larger VSD can be repaired with surgery or with a catheter procedure. Your healthcare provider can create a plan that's right for you.