

## Have you been diagnosed with congenital heart disease?

- » **Congenital heart disease** is a defect present at birth that affects the structure of the heart.
- » In some cases of congenital heart disease, blood leaks from the left side of the heart to the right side (called a shunt), which increases blood flow in the pulmonary arteries and lungs. This can result in the development of a type of **pulmonary hypertension** called **pulmonary arterial hypertension**.

## What are pulmonary hypertension and pulmonary arterial hypertension?

- » **Pulmonary hypertension (PH)** is a disease that can strike anyone regardless of age, sex, or background. PH is defined by high blood pressure in the arteries of the lungs, which eventually enlarges and strains the right ventricle of the heart. This can lead to heart failure or even death.
- » **Pulmonary arterial hypertension (PAH, WHO Group I pulmonary hypertension)** is a disease in which the arteries in the lungs are narrowed. This results in higher blood pressure in the lungs and causes the heart to work harder to pump blood through them.
- » There is currently no cure for pulmonary arterial hypertension, but there are treatments available that can help improve symptoms, reduce the likelihood of heart failure, and slow down the progression of the illness.

## Get informed

If you have congenital heart disease (even if it has been surgically repaired) and are experiencing these symptoms, talk to your doctor about pulmonary hypertension:

- » Breathlessness
- » Exercise intolerance
- » Swollen feet/legs
- » Fainting
- » Fatigue
- » Chest pain
- » Lightheadedness
- » Blue lips/fingers

## Get screened

The primary screening test for pulmonary hypertension is an echocardiogram (a painless ultrasound of the heart). Additional tests may be required to measure the functioning of your heart and lungs.

## Do you need a referral?

Ask your doctor whether you should be referred to a pulmonary hypertension clinic. For more information, visit [www.phacanada.ca/findaphcentre](http://www.phacanada.ca/findaphcentre)

