



Protect Your Heart With Smart Choices



Being a teenager and young adult is fraught with peer pressure, taking risks and making mistakes. It's part of growing up. Use your heart to make smart lifestyle choices.

- **Sexually transmitted infections** are passed from one person to another during a sexual encounter. Using condoms is the only way to prevent them.
- **Street drugs** are illegal and pose dangers to your heart, especially if you have congenital heart disease.
 - Cocaine increases your heart rate and blood pressure, and narrows your smaller blood vessels.
 - Meth can cause several heart-related problems: rapid heart rate, irregular heartbeat, increased blood pressure, stroke and inflammation of the heart lining.
 - Marijuana increases your heart rate.
 - Heroin (especially injected) slows your breathing and heart rate and can cause an infection of the heart lining and valves.
- **Alcohol** can cause liver disease, high blood pressure, heart failure and increase your risk for atrial fibrillation. Binge drinking (5 or more drinks in 1 hour) can lead to stroke and sudden cardiac arrest. The risks are especially high if you had a Fontan procedure.

make healthy lifestyle choices

Tobacco use causes many health-related problems. Your heart is especially at risk. Smoking narrows your blood vessels, lowers the oxygen level in your blood, raises your blood pressure and raises your risk for heart disease.

Smokeless tobacco and vaping are not safe alternatives to smoking.

Talk with a member of your adult congenital heart team if you need help quitting.



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Tattoos, Piercings and Acupuncture

Tattoos, piercings and body modification have been around for centuries. Although they help people express who they are, these practices carry serious risk, especially for someone who has a congenital heart defect.

Side effects can include skin infection, toxic shock syndrome, tetanus, hepatitis B and C and death. One type of serious infection — known as endocarditis — is a huge risk for people who have congenital heart defects. (See the information at right.)

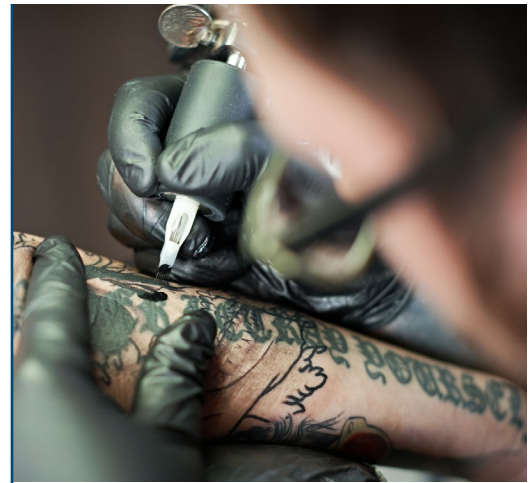
Tattoo inks do not need approval from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and not all tattoo artists have state licenses. Metals in body piercings may contain lead, brass, “surgical steel” or other materials that can cause infections. Home tattoos and piercings are also very dangerous.

Acupuncture uses fine, sterile needles through the skin into specific points on the body to restore the flow of energy to help your body heal itself. It is done by a licensed acupuncturist. Acupuncture that involves semi-permanent needles puts you at risk for endocarditis.

Talk with a member of your adult congenital heart team about your risks for tattoos, piercings, body modification and acupuncture.

Theme Park Ride Warning

Theme parks offer choices: roller coasters, thrill rides or gravity-defying rides. These rides can be dangerous to your heart. Rides that may not be safe should have warnings listed. Talk with a member of your adult congenital heart team about what is safe for you.



Endocarditis

Endocarditis is an infection of the inner lining (endocardium) of your heart chambers and valves.

It happens if bacteria (germs) get into your bloodstream and attach to the heart valves, heart lining or artificial material (man-made heart valves).

Endocarditis causes fever and flu-like symptoms. How quickly the infection develops depends on the type of germ causing it and your specific heart problem.

Antibiotics (medicine) are used to treat the infection. Heart surgery or valve repair may be needed. If left untreated, endocarditis can lead to death.

Please see the fact sheet “Bacterial Endocarditis” for complete information.

