

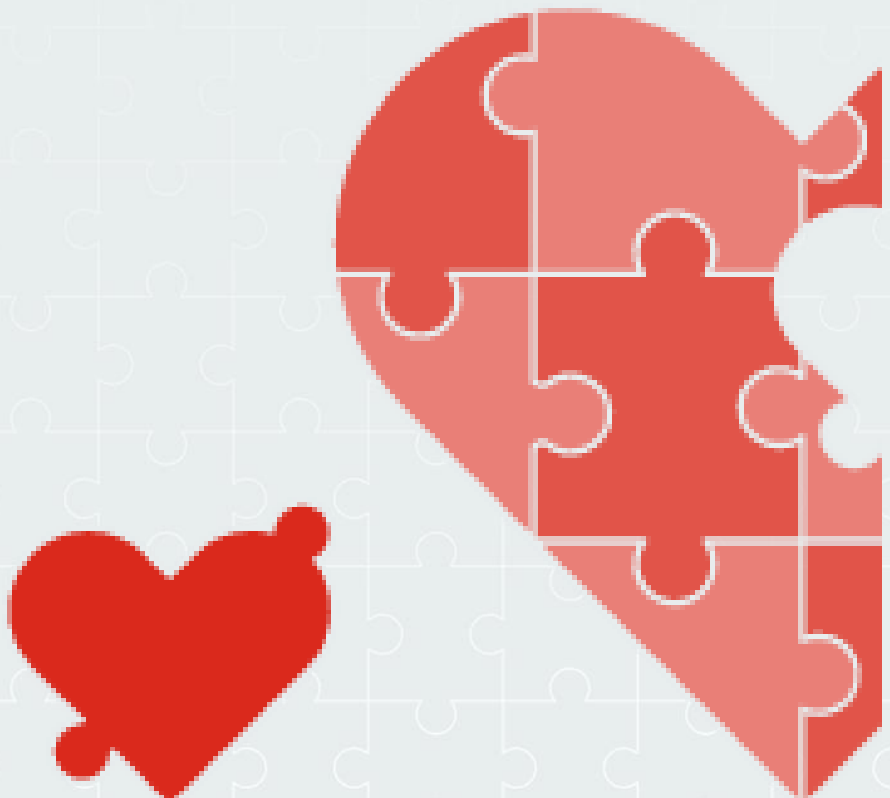


NHS
East Midlands
Congenital Heart Network

**EAST MIDLANDS CONGENITAL HEART NETWORK
PATIENT INFORMATION**

Patent Foramen Ovale (PFO)

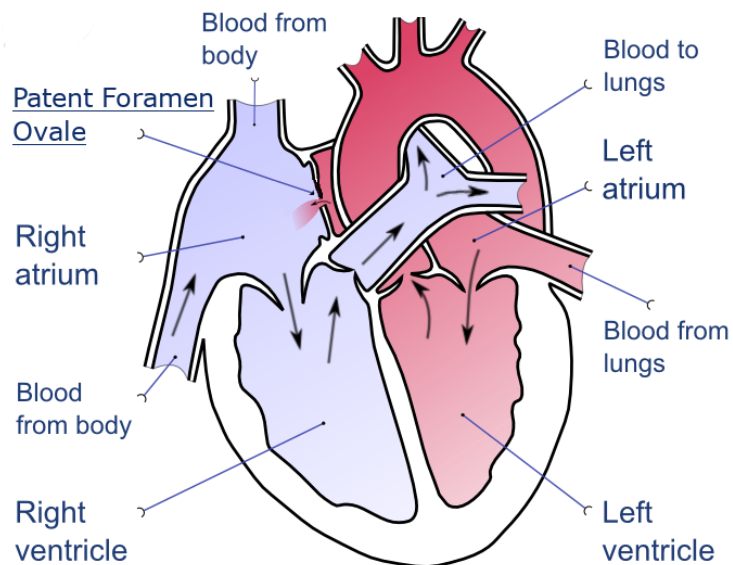
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What is it?

In the womb a baby's oxygen supply is from the placenta rather than the lungs. Blood coming back from the placenta passes through a hole (the foramen ovale) between the upper two chambers of the heart. This allows nutrient rich, oxygenated blood to get easily to the head and the body.

At birth a small piece of tissue closes over most of this hole. In a large proportion of people (between 10 and 35%) the small piece of tissue does not fully close the hole. This is known as a patent foramen ovale.



Does this matter?

A patent foramen ovale (PFO) is a common finding especially in newborn babies. They can remain in up to 1 in 3 people. They do not cause long term problems and there are no symptoms and no restriction in exercise.

If your doctor confirms a PFO then your child does not need follow-up. In some cases a repeat scan may be arranged after 9-12 months to confirm the diagnosis but otherwise no treatment or further investigation is necessary.

Future care:

Because a PFO is a common finding you should consider your child as a normal healthy individual with no restrictions. They do not have a heart defect. No treatment is required. As an adult, a PFO can cause a small increased risk in deep sea diving, you could discuss this with your cardiologist if it becomes relevant in teenage years