

**Department Of Health and Mental Hygiene  
Prevention and Health Promotion Administration  
Office for Genetics and People with Special Health Care Needs**

**Tetralogy of Fallot**

**What is Tetralogy of Fallot?**

- Heart defect which is present at birth (congenital)
- Most common type of critical congenital heart defect
- Consists of four defects of the heart and the major blood vessels:
  1. Ventricular Septal Defect (VSD) - a hole between the right and left ventricles (bottom chambers) of the heart
  2. Narrowing of the pulmonary outflow tract - the valve and artery that connects the heart with the lungs
  3. Overriding Aorta - aorta usually takes oxygen rich blood to the body from the left ventricle to the body. An overriding aorta is shifted and takes blood from the right and left ventricles, reducing the amount of oxygen in the blood that goes to the body
  4. Right Ventricular Hypertrophy - thickened wall of the right ventricle

**What is the cause of Tetralogy of Fallot?**

- There is no known cause, but there are certain risk factors which will increase the chance of this condition occurring:
  1. Drinking alcohol regularly during pregnancy
  2. Maternal diabetes
  3. Mother's age (over 40)
  4. Poor nutrition during pregnancy
  5. Rubella or other viral illnesses during pregnancy
- Infants born with Tetralogy of Fallot are more likely to have chromosomal (genetic) disorders such as Down Syndrome or DiGeorge Syndrome

**Signs and Symptoms**

- Bluish skin color, especially around lips and fingernails
- Clubbing of fingers (broadening and blunting of tips)
- Poor feeding and poor growth
- Fainting episodes

**How is Tetralogy of Fallot treated?**

- Medicines are often used to improve blood flow and circulation.
- Surgical treatment is needed to increase blood flow to the lungs and there may be a later surgery to correct blood flow problems.

**Support Groups and Online Resources**

- Congenital Heart Disease Information and Resources  
<http://www.tchin.org/>  
1-609-822-1572
- Little Hearts Inc.  
[www.littlehearts.org](http://www.littlehearts.org)  
1-866-435-4673
- March of Dimes  
[www.marchofdimes.com](http://www.marchofdimes.com)  
1-410-546-2241
- Office for Genetics and People with Special Health Care Needs  
[phpa.dhmd.maryland.gov/genetics/](http://phpa.dhmd.maryland.gov/genetics/)  
1-855-535-5655
- The Parents' Place Of Maryland  
[www.ppmmd.org](http://www.ppmmd.org)  
1-410-768-9100