

Balloon Notes

Caring for your child.



Congenital Diaphragmatic Hernia (CDH)

What is Congenital Diaphragmatic Hernia (CDH)?

[CDH](#) is a problem with the baby's diaphragm, a muscle between the chest and belly or abdomen. With CDH, a hole (or hernia) develops in the baby's diaphragm that lets organs in the abdomen to push up into the chest. This allows the stomach, liver, intestines or spleen to crowd the baby's heart and lungs.

Some CDH facts

- May cause problems with the lungs because they do not develop well before birth. You may hear this called pulmonary hypoplasia or low-lung volumes.
- Blood vessels going to the lungs may also not develop well before birth. Crowding in the chest area causes the vessels to narrow. As a result, the lungs don't get as much oxygen as normal. This is called pulmonary hypertension.
- CDH is a congenital health problem, which means that your baby was born with it.

What are the main types of Congenital Diaphragmatic Hernia (CDH)?

There are two types of CDH:

Bochdalek hernia

- Most common type
- Affects the back and side of the diaphragm
- Stomach, intestines, liver and spleen may push up into the chest

Morgagni hernia

- Not very common
- Affects the front of the diaphragm
- Liver and intestines may push up into the chest

What happens after my baby is born?

- Your baby's care team at Children's HealthSM will monitor them closely because they may have a hard time breathing. Your baby could turn a pale or bluish color because there is not enough oxygen in their blood.
- Surgery will happen soon after birth to repair the hole in the diaphragm.

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- Treatment called [ECMO \(extracorporeal membrane oxygenation\)](#) may be needed for babies with severe CDH. This treatment uses a machine to cycle blood from your baby through an artificial lung and back to your baby. During this cycle, oxygen is added to your baby's blood. You may also hear this called a heart-lung (cardio-pulmonary) bypass.

What happens after surgery?

- We will monitor your baby closely in the [NICU \(Neonatal Intensive Care Unit\)](#) to see how well their lungs work after surgery.
- We will place a breathing tube in their airway and use a machine called a ventilator to help them breath.
- We may place a feeding tube to help your baby eat.

What are some long-term problems?

- Babies with CDH may continue to have a hard time feeding and/or have acid reflux. Acid reflux is when acid or food comes back up the feeding tube after eating. This may cause them to have trouble growing and gaining weight.
- Your baby may continue to have breathing problems, even after surgery. This may be because their lungs didn't fully develop before birth (pulmonary hypoplasia) and their blood vessels are narrow (pulmonary hypertension).
- Your baby may have heart problems because of the pressure put on their heart from CDH.
- Your child may have delays in development and learning.