British Heart Foundation

Atrial Septal Defect

13

For over 50 years we've pioneered research that's transformed the lives of people living with heart and circulatory conditions. Our work has been central to the discoveries of vital treatments that are changing the fight against heart disease. But so many people still need our help.

From babies born with life-threatening heart problems to the many Mums, Dads and Grandparents who survive a heart attack and endure the daily battles of heart failure.

Join our fight for every heartbeat in the UK. Every pound raised, minute of your time and donation to our shops will help make a difference to people's lives.

WHAT IS AN ATRIAL SEPTAL DEFECT?

An ASD is an atrial septal defect. This is a hole in the membrane (septum) that separates the top two chambers of your heart, the atrial septum. An ASD is a congenital heart condition, which means that before you were born there was a problem with the development in the structure of your heart.

Although the ASD was present at your birth, it may not have been found until you were older. Some small ASDs close by themselves. If this happens and the ASD closes fully, that person is no longer considered to have a heart condition.

There are three main types of ASD?

- Secundum defect (ostium secundum defect), this is the most common type. The hole is near the centre of your atrial septum.
- Primum defect (ostium primum defect) is in the lower part of your atrial septum. In this ASD there is often an associated abnormality of one of the left sided heart valves.
- Sinus venosus defect is a hole near where the main vein carrying oxygen-poor blood back to the body enters the heart.

THINGS TO TALK ABOUT

- **Physical activity**
- **Healthy lifestyle**
- **Pregnancy**
- **Contraception**
- **Medicines (including warfarin)**

TREATMENTS

Sometimes, if you have a small atrial septal defect, there is no need for any treatment. In some children this hole may close by itself. If that happens, they are no longer considered to have a heart condition. If your ASD is large and is starting to affect your heart function, your ASD can be closed either through a catheter or through open heart surgery.

Trans-catheter closure
You may have your ASD closed through a catheter. The catheter (tube) is quite small and is put into your heart through a vein, so there is no scar on your chest.

SURGERY

You may have your ASD closed by open heart surgery. Small holes can be closed by suturing, which means sewing the edges of the hole together. Bigger holes are covered with patches, either made of pieces of the pericardium, which is the membrane that covers the heart, or instead the patches can be made of a synthetic material. The scar on your chest will heal and fade to a paler colour over time.

AFTER SURGERY

Most young people who have had their ASD repaired go on to lead active lives. As you have had an ASD you sometimes develop abnormal heart rhythms (arrhythmias) as you get older. So it's important you continue to have check-ups in a cardiac clinic throughout your life.

Find out more about your heart and visit:

- yheart.net
- chfed.org.uk
- thesf.org.uk

Revealing the facts about your condition

FIGHT FOR EVERY HEARTBEAT
bhf.org.uk

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YOUR HEART

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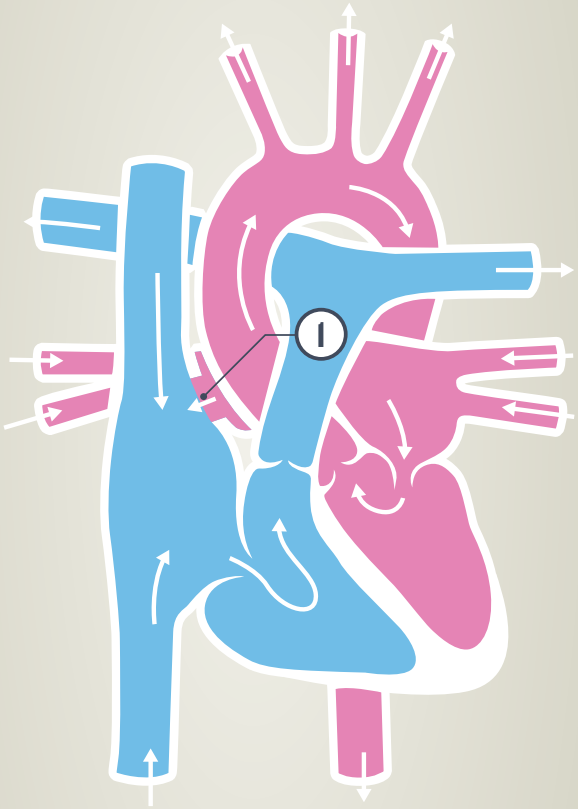
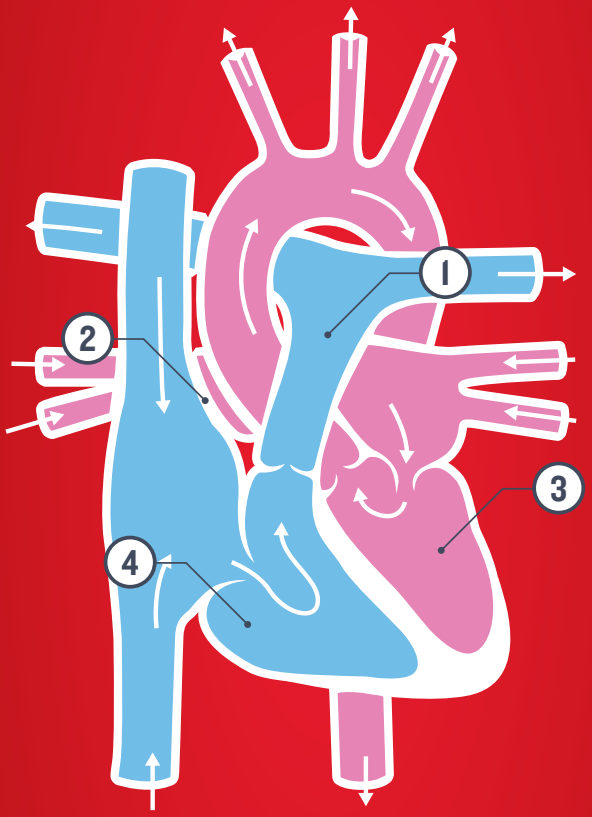


1 atrial septal defect (ASD).

THE HEART



1 pulmonary artery
2 atrial septum
3 left ventricle
4 right ventricle.