

HEART FAILURE

This is a commonly used term, which means that the heart is failing to do its job properly. It can occur if a child has a Congenital Heart Defect (malformation), following surgery as the heart is healing, or as the heart muscle grows tired because it has to work too hard.

It means that the heart muscle is unable to pump blood around the body efficiently often leaving fluid in the body tissues (e.g. the lungs and liver).

These are the Signs and Symptoms of Heart Failure

Breathlessness:	Especially when feeding or taking exercise.
Poor Feeding:	Because the heart is working hard, eating and drinking become hard work.
Tiredness:	Because all the child's energy is being used to keep the heart working.
Puffiness (oedema):	Especially around the eyes, because fluid is not being passed around the body properly.
Small amounts of urine:	Because fluid is not moving around the body to the kidneys.
Irritability:	Because the child feels unwell or uncomfortable.

If your child is showing any of the above signs especially when feeding or taking gentle exercise e.g. walking, contact your local doctor. It may be that your child has a simple cold but it is always important that someone assesses your child.

If the child is very tired and not completing feeds it may be necessary for them to have a short stay in hospital and some help with feeding. Medications are also given to help the heart function and to help the child pass more urine.

This treatment will give the heart an opportunity to rest and recover. (*See section on Commonly Used Drugs*). Most children are able to live at home on medication once their condition has stabilised.