



American
Heart
Association.

Supporting Good Mental Health in Adults with Congenital Heart Disease

Up to half of adults living with congenital heart disease (CHD) experience mental health conditions, such as depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). By comparison, these conditions affect about 30% of adults in the general population. Depression in adults with CHD may be associated with:

- Being unable to complete daily tasks
- An increased risk for heart failure
- More poor health outcomes that can lead to a greater need for health care services
- A higher risk for PTSD due to uncertainty about their illness and outcomes

Referring ACHD patients for mental health support

Adults with CHD should be regularly checked for and mental health conditions by a healthcare professional and referred to treatment when needed. Adults with CHD can have fewer symptoms of distress and depression when they receive timely, targeted mental health support, including group or one-on-one therapy. Identifying high-risk ACHD patients and referring them to treatment may help their psychological symptoms, quality of life and heart health.

Neurocognitive differences in adults with congenital heart disease

There is limited evidence on thinking, memory and attention problems in patients with CHD. Yet it is likely that the impact of CHD and surgery in childhood continues to affect these functions in adulthood. More than 33% of adults with CHD ages 40 and older have pre-frailty, frailty or cognitive decline.

Adults with CHD may want to ask for neuropsychological testing. These results can guide therapies to help with academic, behavioral, psychosocial and adaptive functioning. Diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation may help improve cognitive function and quality of life for adults with CHD.

[Heart.org/CHD](https://www.heart.org/CHD)



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A Survivor's Story – Dianne Ruiz

Dianne Ruiz was born with pulmonary stenosis and suffered from panic attacks as a young adult. She learned to practice self-care, including listening to podcasts while taking long walks to support her mental health. Today, Dianne promotes the benefits of a healthy lifestyle in her community.

