

"Cor triatriatum is an extremely rare congenital (present at birth) heart defect. Normally, the human heart has four chambers of which two are the atria. These two are separated from each other by a partition (septum) called the atrial septum. The other two chambers, known as ventricles, are also separated by a septum. In cor triatriatum there is a small extra chamber above the left atrium of the heart. The pulmonary veins, returning blood from the lungs, drain into this extra "third atrium." The passage of blood from the lungs into the heart (left atrium and ventricle) is slowed by this extra chamber. Cor triatriatum may eventually lead to features of congestive heart failure and obstruction over time. The exact cause of cor triatriatum is not known. Cor triatriatum is an extremely rare congenital heart condition that affects males and females in equal numbers. In the USA, this disorder accounts for an extremely small percentage (0.1% to 0.4%) of all infants with congenital heart disease. The diagnosis of cor triatriatum is usually made by using imaging techniques such as magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) and echocardiography (EC). In another procedure known as a cardiac catheterization, a long fine tube (catheter) is inserted into a large vein and then channeled directly into the heart. This allows the physician to further identify heart defects and to determine the rates of blood flow through the heart. Angiography is also a very useful diagnostic procedure and allows the physician to view an enhanced x-ray of the heart. Children with cor triatriatum also have abnormal EKG patterns."