



Heart and lungs in children:

Congenital heart defects in children

After birth, the doctor may suspect a diagnosis of a congenital heart defect if a child has growth delays or changes in the color of the lips, tongue or fingernails.



Causes:

During the first six weeks of pregnancy, the baby's heart begins to form and starts beating. And the major blood vessels that run to and from the heart also begin to develop during this critical time.

It's at this point in a baby's development that congenital heart defects may begin to develop. Researchers aren't sure exactly what causes most of these defects, but they think genetics, certain medical conditions, some medications, and environmental or lifestyle factors, such as smoking, may play a role.

Treatment:

Treatment of congenital heart defects in children depends on the specific type of heart problem and how severe it is. Sometimes, a congenital heart defect may have no long-term effect on a child's health and may safely go untreated. Other congenital heart defects, such as a small hole in the heart, may close as a child ages.

Serious congenital heart defects require treatment soon after they're diagnosed. Treatment may involve medications, heart procedures or surgeries, or a heart transplant.

Lungs:

Childhood pneumonia

Many people associate pneumonia with the elderly, but it is actually the biggest infectious killer of children worldwide.



Causes:

Pneumonia is an acute respiratory infection of the lungs. It doesn't have one single cause – it can develop from either bacteria, viruses or fungi in the air. When a child is infected, his lungs are filled with fluid and it becomes difficult to breath

Symptoms:

Because pneumonia is an infection of the lungs, the common symptoms are coughing, trouble breathing and fever. Children with pneumonia usually experience fast breathing, or their lower chest may draw in or retract when they inhale (in a healthy person, the chest expands during inhalation).

Treatment:

The treatment for pneumonia depends on the type of pneumonia. In developing countries, a large number of pneumonia cases is caused by bacteria and can be treated with low-cost antibiotics.

Sometimes a ventilator is needed or other treatments.

