

# Heart Defects in New Mexico: *Truncus Arteriosus*



Congenital heart defects (CHDs) are the most common type of birth defect. A child is said to have a CHD when he or she is born with a heart that is not formed normally. As medical care and treatment have advanced, babies with CHD are living longer and healthier lives.

## **What is New Mexico doing to catch heart defects early ?**

All birthing facilities in New Mexico are required to screen newborns for risk of heart defects, including congenital heart defects (CHDs), such as truncus arteriosus.\*

The screen for CHDs, called pulse oximetry, is painless and measures the baby's pulse and the level of oxygen in the baby's blood. Screening performed in the birthing facility before discharge allows immediate referral for follow-up testing. Pulse oximetry alone cannot diagnose a heart defect.

\*Parents choosing to forego this screening must sign a waiver.

## **What are the symptoms of a heart defect?**

It's important for parents and caregivers to be able to identify the symptoms of a heart defect. If you notice any of these symptoms, seek medical help immediately.

- Pounding heart
- Weak pulse
- Pale or blue-colored skin, nails, or lips
- Fast or troubled breathing
- Poor feeding
- Very sleepy

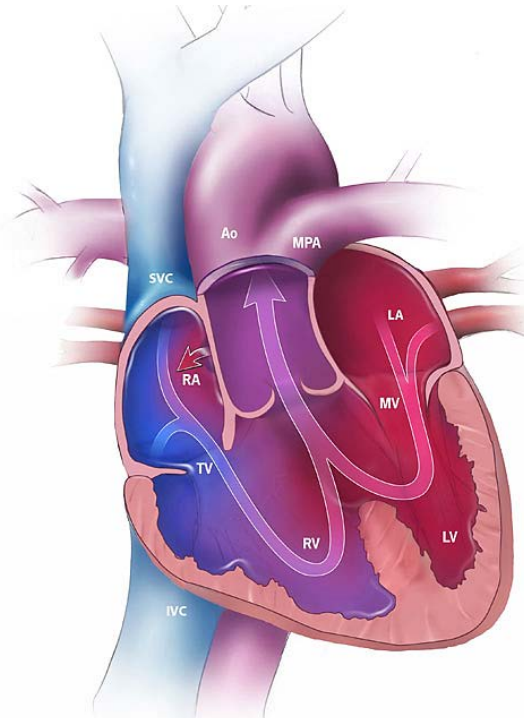
# Truncus Arteriosus

## What is truncus arteriosus?

Truncus arteriosus (also known as common truncus) is a rare and life threatening heart defect present at birth. The heart of a baby with truncus arteriosus has a connection between the aorta (pumps blood from the heart to the body) and the pulmonary artery (pumps blood from the heart to the lungs). This connection causes oxygen-rich blood and oxygen-poor blood to mix together before flowing to the lungs and to the body. This results in too much blood flowing to the lungs and not enough blood flowing to the body. Immediate issues include difficulty breathing and decreased oxygen to the body. Babies that have truncus arteriosus can have other syndromes or other heart defects such as ventricular septal defect (a hole between the bottom two chambers of the heart) or a single common valve (a valve that controls blood flow out of the heart).

## What can cause truncus arteriosus?

In most cases, the cause of heart defects are unknown. Some known causes include medical conditions of the mother such as diabetes, lupus, rubella infections, or obesity. Smoking, drinking alcohol, or taking certain medications can also increase the risk of a heart defect. Other known causes include alterations to the genes or chromosomes during the development of the fetus.



RA. Right Atrium  
RV. Right Ventricle  
LA. Left Atrium  
LV. Left Ventricle

SVC. Superior Vena Cava  
IVC. Inferior Vena Cava  
MPA. Main Pulmonary Artery  
Ao. Aorta

TV. Tricuspid Valve  
MV. Mitral Valve

## How is truncus arteriosus treated?

Each case of truncus arteriosus is different, so it is important to discuss treatment options with a pediatric cardiologist. All babies with truncus arteriosus will require surgery within the first week of life. Surgery typically results in a very good quality of life for most children and additional treatments like medication or supplemental nutrition may be prescribed.

## How common is truncus arteriosus in New Mexico?

Truncus arteriosus is not common. There are approximately 1-2 new cases in New Mexico each year.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities: <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/heartdefects/truncusarteriosus.html>