

Top 10 Tips for Adult Congenital Heart Disease (ACHD) Patients

1. Ensure you visit the dentist regularly every 6–12 months and clean your teeth at least twice a day, to reduce the risk of endocarditis.
2. Ensure that when you have your blood pressure taken, it is done on your right arm, for both one off measurements and for 24 hour tests.
3. Never stop taking your tablets and make sure that you do not run out. If you are on warfarin you need to ensure you are having your INR (international normalized ratio) checked. Bring an up to date list of your medication with you to each clinic appointment.
4. Do not drink excessive amounts of alcohol as this can cause heart rhythm problems, as can stimulant drinks such as Red Bull, Monster and Relentless.
5. Ensure you drink plenty of fluids, such as water, especially if the weather is hot or you are exercising. This is particularly important if you have a Fontan circulation.
6. If travelling abroad ensure you have adequate travel insurance, which should include repatriation – cover for the insured traveller to return home on medical grounds. If you are travelling to Europe you should also have a European Health (EHIC) card. Always take a copy of your last clinic letter and your ECG with you.
7. Ensure you have your annual flu vaccination and one off pneumonia vaccination.
8. Exercise is good as it helps to keep you healthy, talk to your ACHD Cardiologist or nurse specialist if unsure what you can do. The 'Talk Test' (still being able to talk whilst exercising, despite being breathless) is a good rule to follow, as is not doing heavy weights.
9. Eat a healthy balanced diet.
10. For our female patients contraception is very important, as pregnancy can be high risk. Some patients will need progesterone only contraception. A planned pregnancy after up to date tests and counselling by your ACHD Consultant is the best approach. Let us know straight away if you find out you are pregnant.

Useful websites

The Somerville Foundation
www.thesf.org.uk

Little Heart Matters
www.lhm.org.uk

British Heart Foundation
www.bhf.org.uk

ADULT CONGENITAL HEART DISEASE UNIT – Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham
Mindelsohn Way, Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 2GW Tel: 0121 627 2000