



TOP “TO-DO’S”

HELPING YOUR CONGENITAL HEART DISEASE PATIENTS PREPARE FOR COLLEGE

Heading to college is a big step for any teenager, let alone a teenager with a congenital heart defect (CHD). However, there are important steps you can take to help your college-bound patients prepare for the transition.

Arm your patients with knowledge

- Make sure they know what type of congenital heart lesion they have and what surgery or catheterization procedures they had to repair it.
- Be certain that they understand the warning signs of significant complications related to their CHD and encourage them to seek care promptly.

Prepare your college-bound patients

- Ensure they have an appointment to see you at least 6 months before leaving for college and arrange for any needed testing.
- Provide them with copies of their medical records, including a copy of their EKG and a CD or copy of the echocardiogram or other imaging tests.
- Encourage them to get a medical ID containing key information. A medical ID bracelet, keeping medical ID information on an iPhone or Android app in case of emergency, or a print summary, such as the Adult Congenital Heart Association Passport, (<https://www.achaheart.org/media/1215/php2018web.pdf>) are all options.
- Identify a CHD cardiologist closest to their school and have the patient sign consents to transfer records.
- Make sure they have a plan to renew their medications at a pharmacy convenient to campus.
- If they have a pacemaker or device, explore options for remote monitoring so pacemaker checks can continue at school.
- Encourage them to see a dentist and get routine cleaning done before they leave for college and on vacations home. For women: Discuss birth control methods, including which are safe for their type of congenital heart disease.

What your patients should do when they arrive at college

- Encourage them to check in with student health services and provide copies of medical records.
- Explain that excess alcohol, caffeine and recreational drugs and some nutritional supplements can trigger complications of CHDs.
- Discuss appropriate forms of exercise and remind them of any restrictions.