People with **congenital heart defects** face challenges that evolve over time.

Recognizing special needs beyond medical care is important for children and adults living with congenital heart defects (CHD), according to the American Heart Association.

**Psychological Care**

People born with heart defects may experience psychological and social challenges from infancy through adulthood.

- Children with more complex CHDs are five times more likely to get an anxiety diagnosis in their lifetime compared to children without CHD.
- For adults with CHD, the rate of experiencing a mood or anxiety disorder is about 50%, compared to about 30% for adults in the general population.
- The AHA advocates for mental health assessments and support to be part of comprehensive care for all people with CHD, not just in some circumstances.

**Social Determinants of Health**

Disparities driven by social determinants of health limit access to the lifelong specialty care needed by people living with CHDs.

- Specialty care services are concentrated in urban areas, making access difficult for survivors in rural or smaller communities and those without transportation or flexible work schedules.
- Certain communities may have limited programs for home monitoring and visitation as well as nutrition, growth and cognitive development (such as school-based outreach).
- Fewer than 500 board-certified specialists in adult congenital heart disease support the growing number of adults with CHD in the U.S., and they are primarily located in urban areas.

**Transitioning to Adulthood**

Children with CHDs need special attention to successfully transition to adult-oriented health care.

- Young people living with CHDs may not seek care as they become adults until they are facing a health crisis.
- Extended time without routine care can have a significant impact on long-term health and quality of life.
- A better understanding of transition needs and barriers is needed to minimize worsening health disparities for people with low socioeconomic status and those from historically underresourced communities.

Sources:

- As people born with congenital heart defects now live longer, challenges evolve over time (https://bit.ly/3EiFrent)
- Psychological Outcomes and Interventions for Individuals With Congenital Heart Disease: A Scientific Statement From the American Heart Association (https://www.ahajournals.org/doi/10.1161/JAHA.122.025278)
- Addressing Social Determinants of Health and Mitigating Health Disparities Across the Lifespan in Congenital Heart Disease: A Scientific Statement From the American Heart Association (https://www.ahajournals.org/doi/10.1161/JAHA.122.025358)
- Advances in Managing Transition to Adulthood for Adolescents With Congenital Heart Disease: A Practical Approach to Transition Program Design: A Scientific Statement From the American Heart Association (https://www.ahajournals.org/doi/10.1161/JAHA.122.025278)

The Children’s Heart Foundation and the American Heart Association are proud to join forces to raise awareness and advance lifesaving research for congenital heart defects.