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## News



### Health Experts Want to Educate New Parents

By Erin Leach, Anchor/Reporter

Video High

IOWA CITY - Some health experts hope the upcoming holiday will bring attention to other matters of the heart. A congenital heart defect is the most common birth defect in the U.S. but many new parents know nothing about it.

Today kicks off a week devoted to raising awareness about the condition. It's something Mark, Jenny and their son Jack know a thing or two about.

Mark says, "Jack's had two open heart surgeries, the first one when he was nine days old."

He's missing a valve in his heart, but until he was born, his parents had no idea anything was wrong. Jenny says, "I had two or three ultrasounds and it wasn't caught."

As for what causes congenital heart defects, no one really knows. It might be genetic but most cases are actually sporadic.

The best doctors can do is test those who are "high risk." Those include parents who have a congenital heart defect of their own or other medical conditions like diabetes. But here at the Children's Hospital of Iowa, they've gone a little further and started a support group called "Heart Friends."

"The message is they're not alone, there is support, they can make connections and that constantly things are being done," says Trudy Pierick, ARNP.

Over the years, there have been some pretty significant advances in treating this relatively unknown condition. Dr. Ian Law says, "Heart disease used to be fatal in the newborn period and now these people are living into their 50's and 60's."

And that's giving hope to families like the Petty's. Jenny adds, "Maybe he might not be able to play sports but he's still living a quality of life and there's still a lot of things out there and we appreciate him for the gift he is."

"Congenital Heart Awareness Week" ends on Valentines Day.

Right now in Iowa there are around 350 people with a congenital heart defect.

For more information, visit [Congenital Heart Defect Awareness Week](#).

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
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