

Diaphragmatic Hernia

What is it?

Diaphragmatic hernia (pronounced dahy-uh-frag-mat-ik her-ne-uh) is a birth defect of the diaphragm. The **diaphragm** is the large muscle that separates the chest from the belly. If a baby has **diaphragmatic hernia**, there is a hole in the diaphragm that can allow organs to move through into the chest. A baby's lungs may not develop normally due to limited space in the chest. This can cause difficulty breathing for the baby at birth. Diaphragmatic hernia can be on the left side, right side, or both sides. Many babies with diaphragmatic hernia have other conditions of the brain, heart, and intestines.



Diaphragmatic Hernia

Image courtesy of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities



Normal Diaphragm

How common is it?

About 1 out of every 4,000 babies born each year have diaphragmatic hernia.

What causes it?

The exact cause of diaphragmatic hernia is unknown. There are many factors that may cause it. More research is needed to understand the causes of it.

How is it diagnosed?

Diaphragmatic hernia can be diagnosed during pregnancy using screening tests to check for birth defects. The condition also can be diagnosed after birth if a baby has difficulty breathing.

How is it treated?

Surgery is necessary to repair the diaphragm. This usually happens shortly after birth. Your child's doctor should discuss appropriate treatment options with you.

For more information:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/birthdefects/diaphragmatic-hernia.html>

Children's Hospital of Philadelphia

<http://www.chop.edu/conditions-diseases/congenital-diaphragmatic-hernia-cdh>