

Echogenic Intracardiac Focus (EIF)

What is an Echogenic Intracardiac Focus?

An echogenic intracardiac focus (or EIF) is seen on ultrasound and appears as a small or bright spot in the baby's heart. This is typically thought to represent a tiny deposit of calcium in the muscle of the heart.

Does an EIF affect the function or structure of the heart?

An EIF does not affect the way the heart functions or its development. It is not a birth defect.

How common are EIFs?

An ultrasound finding of an EIF is typically considered a normal variant and it occurs in 3-5% of normal pregnancies.

Will an EIF resolve?

An EIF does not actually go away, but it may be harder to see as the pregnancy progresses. As the heart grows, the bright spot remains the same and becomes harder to see. There is no reason to repeat ultrasounds to monitor an EIF. There is no reason to inform the pediatrician at birth about this finding.

How does this affect my baby?

There is a very weak association with certain chromosomal abnormalities, specifically Down Syndrome (Trisomy 21). When EIF is seen on ultrasound there is a slightly increased risk for Down Syndrome compared to fetuses that do not have this finding. However, other factors are a lot more important including other ultrasound findings and the results of screening tests.

Is there a test that can help reassure me?

There are several additional tests that can be performed for screening. A maternal blood sample can be used to assess risk for Down Syndrome. Amniocentesis is the only diagnostic test.