

Top tips for supporting loved ones

Finding out a family member or friend's child has a heart condition can leave you feeling scared, upset, powerless, angry - even guilty. You might be unsure of what to say or what to do. And you'll probably struggle with your own emotions and feelings, too.

So try to bear in mind that there's no normal way to deal with this - and no right or wrong way either. Talking honestly - and listening openly - can help a lot. And remember to look after yourself, too, because CHD is tough on everyone.

Top tips for supporting your loved ones

Finding out your child has been diagnosed with a heart condition can be a very difficult time for parents, whether this is during pregnancy or once their child is born. Support from family and friends is invaluable in helping families cope with the difficulties they may face, and there's lots of things you can do to help:

Offer help in the home - whether it's shopping, doing laundry, delivering cooked dishes or cleaning, helping with tasks like these enables your loved one to concentrate on their child/children

Listen to your loved ones - offering a true listening ear is a great way of giving support

Try to steer clear from offering advice based on your own life experiences - everyone's path is unique, be aware that advice (however helpfully intended) is not always appreciated by parents in this situation

Send cards/letters - if a child is unwell and in hospital parents often have little time or inclination to speak on the phone with lots of people, therefore posting cards and letters can be a nice way of showing them you care and are there for them

Organise a 'communicator in chief' - it can be hard for parents to know how to communicate with all their friends and family when they're going through a difficult time. Organising someone responsible for contacting different groups of friends to keep them updated can be a real help - perfect for grandparents or aunties/uncles.

Take care of siblings - if your loved one has other children to take care of it can be a real source of concern for them, having to deal with separation caused by hospital stays is not easy. If you are a close relative/friend then why not do what you can to spend time with and have fun with siblings.

Don't assume they don't want to be disturbed - whilst parents may not be able to make contact easily or frequently, being in hospital as a parent of a sick child can be a very lonely, worrying and scary time. Let them know you care by sending messages to them, don't assume you're bothering them.