Tips for Adults Managing Congenital Heart Disease

1. Learn all you can about your heart defect.

2. Find a cardiologist with specific training in treating adults with congenital heart defects. He/she is skilled in recognizing problems that might arise because of the defect or its repair.

3. Stay organized. Keep detailed records of any procedures or surgeries you had done, as well as an updated list of medicine that you take now and have been prescribed in the past.

4. Keep all follow-up appointments—even if you’re feeling well. Your heart team needs to monitor your heart over time and help keep other risk factors for (acquired) heart disease in check.

5. Ask if it’s safe for you to get pregnant. Many women with congenital heart problems can have successful pregnancies, but careful planning is important.

6. Listen to your body, and report any changes.

7. Adopt a heart-healthy lifestyle:
   - Eat a low-fat, heart-healthy diet.
   - Stick to an exercise plan that is safe for you.
   - Stay at a healthy body weight.
   - Care for your teeth: Brush twice a day, floss and see a dentist twice a year.

8. Take your medications as prescribed.

9. Stay socially connected. Having a dependable support system and sharing interests can be energizing.

10. The healthier you are overall, the better. Keep up with annual checkups, ask about getting vaccinated against the flu and pneumonia, and don’t smoke.

11. Be positive. A long, healthy life with congenital heart disease is possible.

For more information about congenital heart disease, visit CardioSmart.org/CHD.

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