

PATIENT HANDOUT- ECHOGENIC INTRACARDIAC FOCUS

An echogenic intracardiac focus (EIF) refers to a bright white spot that is seen in the heart of some fetuses. The brightness is due to a tiny speck of calcium that lies in a small muscle called a papillary muscle, which is a muscle that helps open and close a valve in the heart. It is not entirely clear why some fetuses have this bright white spot and some don't, but we know that the chance varies somewhat with the ethnic background of the fetus and parents. Some points to understand about about EIFs:

- 1- They do not cause a problem with the heart, and are not associated with heart defects or abnormal heart function. You should think of an EIF in the same way you think of a freckle on someone's face; it's just a small spot that causes no other problems.
- 2- EIFs do not really go away, but they stay the same size as the rest of the baby grows significantly. As a result, they become a tiny background speck that we often don't see as the fetus gets older.
- 3- EIFs are seen in approximately 3-4% of fetuses overall, but are seen very commonly in fetuses of Asian ancestry, including Eastern Indian populations. In the Asian population, they can be seen up to 10-15% of the time. That means that EIFs are more common in the Asian population than left-handedness.
- 4- When an EIF is seen in your baby, we do several important things. Firstly, we confirm that the rest of the baby's anatomy is perfectly normal in appearance. We also look at all of the other factors that bear into any given baby's risk of Down syndrome and other chromosome disorders. When an EIF is seen in a baby who otherwise looks absolutely perfect, the risk of Down syndrome is still slightly decreased overall. Because most patients are at low risk for Down syndrome, the risk will remain low even with an EIF. However, we correlate all the information, including your age, screening test results and other features we see on the fetus, to come up with the best estimate of Down syndrome for you. Depending on the final risk, some patients may consider the option of additional testing, though many decide that this is unnecessary.

If you have any additional questions, you are free to contact the office to discuss these concerns further.