

What Is an Echogenic Focus?

Approximately one out of every 20 to 30 pregnancies has an echogenic focus or foci on ultrasound. It is considered a normal variation and generally doesn't affect the baby's heart or its functioning. It is not a heart defect and for the majority of instances in which this occurs, it poses no risk to the fetus.¹

While the EIF might disappear during the third trimester, many times it is still present on later ultrasounds—follow-up imaging studies aren't typically recommended.

Causes

The exact cause of an EIF is not known.² The bright spot might show up because there is an excess of calcium in that area of the heart muscle, but this isn't known for certain. On an ultrasound, areas with more calcium appear brighter, like your teeth.

Risk Factors

An echogenic focus can occur in any pregnancy. The rates of EIF in mothers of Asian descent are markedly higher (by about 30 percent).³

The cause of EIF is unknown. Nothing the mother did or didn't do caused the EIF, and it has nothing to do with a mother's age, health, lifestyle, or the number of pregnancies she's had.

Effect on the Fetus

An echogenic focus poses no health risk to the fetus, and when it is born, there are no risks to the baby's health or cardiac functioning. It is considered a variation of normal heart anatomy and is not associated with any short or long-term health problems. If an EIF is the only notable finding on the ultrasound, it is considered an "isolated" finding and nothing to worry about.

If there are other abnormal findings, this may indicate another condition like Down syndrome (also known as trisomy 21). If there is an EIF, a more detailed scan of the anatomy may be performed. Generally, however, an EIF is considered a normal finding when it exists in isolation.⁴

Further Testing

If you are concerned about Down syndrome or other possible atypical events, talk with your obstetrician or a [genetic counselor](#). While there are no established follow-up tests for an EIF, there are various prenatal tests that are available to you, like amniocentesis. Your pregnancy care provider can discuss the risks and benefits of additional testing with you, and it might be worth seeking out a genetic counselor for another opinion and to discuss your concerns.