

Naura Alisha *1 year old* *Paediatric VSD (5mm hole)*

I am Normaslinda binti Mohd Noh, and I am Naura's mother. My husband, Muhammad Nurakmal bin Yaacob, and I live in Penang but we came to IJN to treat our daughter's condition.

When she was 2 months old, she started developing sputum in her cough while we were on holiday in Mersing. This was when she was first diagnosed with a ventricular septal defect (VSD). We took her to a clinic in town and the doctor told us that she was straining herself crying. Her skin had a bluish tinge and after that the doctor insisted that we take her to a hospital in Mersing. She then had to go to a hospital in Johor for a week because her oxygen levels were not sufficient and so she required machine support.

After a while everything seemed alright again and she did not need to be hospitalised. But when she was 4 months old, she fell sick again and this time she was coughing, her oxygen levels dropped and she had to be warded for 3 weeks in a hospital near Penang. This stopped for a while but it started again by the time she was 7 months old.

At this point, the doctors told us it was time that she went to a specialist and so they made arrangements with IJN to have an operation soon. We had a Guarantee Letter (GL) that helped a lot and took us directly to IJN. She finally went for corrective surgery last year in August, operated by a specialist team for complicated paediatric cases. It was very quick and efficient, which is why we chose IJN in the first place.

Once she was admitted, her condition became more stable because she was being monitored constantly. After the operation, she started putting on more weight and now she is quite active. IJN has been following up her medical care and treatment for the past 11 months, which includes coming in frequently for observation.

Before the operation she would drink less than one bottle of milk a day and even that was not enough. She could not eat properly either. She also used to cry a lot, often when she went to sleep and woke up in the middle of it. Now she eats much better and she can eat bread, biscuits and other things. Her portions used to be a lot smaller before but now she has improved greatly. There has not been any drastic changes in the way we take care of her though, we are still as vigilant as ever.



Patients, *Stories*

Hafizah Abdul Manan 50 years old

Adult ASD (18mm hole)

I was diagnosed with an atrial septal defect (ASD) on March 2020. My heart rhythm did not feel right, because it would beat very fast and then very slow. It was not steady, it had a lot of delays and then it would continue as normal. All of this would happen in the space of a few seconds, even when I was resting. At that point, I thought everything is still okay.

When I went to the clinic, the doctor caught this irregular heartbeat (known as arrhythmia) with their stethoscope. I did an ECG on the same night but everything still seemed alright. The x-ray did not show anything unusual. It was only when I went to a specialist and they did an echocardiogram test, that they caught the hole in my heart. It was really scary to me at the time. According to the doctor, I was born with this defect but it was never tested or diagnosed, so I continued to do my activities and work without any restrictions. I felt an irregular heartbeat as early as 7 years old but it went away and never flared up again until I was 45, which was a long time before I was actually diagnosed.

At this point, I knew I had to go to IJN to treat my heart condition. I was told that if these symptoms kept occurring, it would create more complications like high blood pressure and diabetes. I checked my options and other treatments and IJN seemed like the best option. Besides their good reputation, I could use a Guarantee Letter (GL) from government hospitals and my position as a civil servant to receive treatment at IJN.

They performed a cardiac catheterisation procedure on me to close the hole without surgically opening my chest. They had to check and re-check if there would be any conceivable complications to my heart and lungs, otherwise they would not risk my safety. They inserted a microscopic camera through a vein in my groin in order to see the inside of the heart. Then they used a double umbrella device that would close my ASD from the inside.

After the procedure I started using a HOLTER monitor, but it was only in place for 24 hours. That is why I am here to see the doctor today, because he wants to check my results. Everything felt okay for the first 10 days after the operation but then I felt uncomfortable in my chest. I learned that my heart was taking time to regulate back to its normal blood flow which by the age of 50 is sure to change. When the hole was closed, my heart has to adapt to how my blood was now flowing and it was a strong pressure to withstand.

