

ECMO



What is ECMO?

Some babies have lung or heart disease that keeps the right amount of oxygen from getting to body organs. These babies may be helped by the use of an ECMO machine. ECMO stands for Extracorporeal Membrane Oxygenation. It is a technique using a machine that gives the blood oxygen outside of the body. ECMO is used when treatment with a ventilator has not worked and there is no other treatment available. When a baby is on the ECMO machine, the blood is being given oxygen just as it would if the lungs or heart were normal.

How is a baby put on the ECMO machine?

A surgeon at the ECMO center will put tubes in the right side of the baby's neck and maybe in the groin area. The procedure takes about 15-30 minutes.

Does ECMO hurt?

When placed on the machine the baby will be given pain medicine. The baby will also get medicine to keep him/her calm during the test.

How does ECMO work?

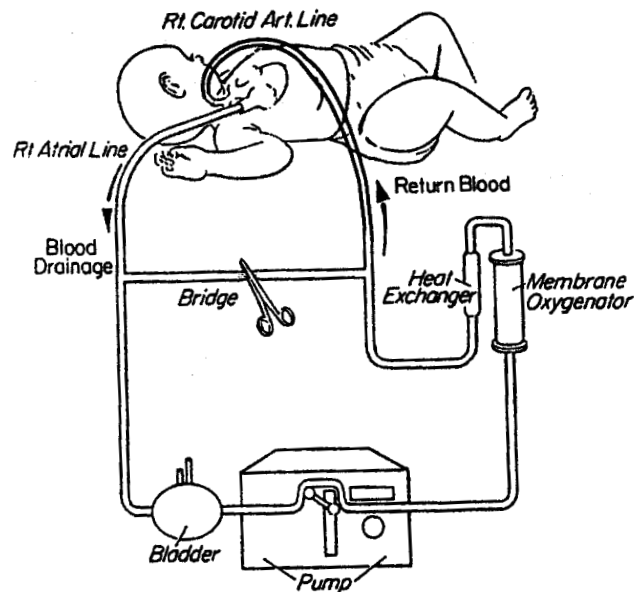
One tube drains the blood out of the heart and sends it to the machine to pick up the oxygen. After the oxygen gets into the blood, the other tube brings the blood back to the heart. It will then be pumped by the heart to other organs.

What are the risks of ECMO?

As with all procedures, there are some risks. These include bleeding, infection and intracranial hemorrhage. The doctors and nurses will be watching your baby closely for these risks.

What does the machine look like?

Here is a picture to show you what the machine looks like. You can also see how your baby will look on the machine. At first, this can be very scary to look at. But remember ECMO specialists will be at your baby's bedside around the clock. They are there to work the machine and see that all goes well.



How long do babies stay on the ECMO machine?

Usually 7 to 10 days is the expected frame for ECMO therapy. But because each baby responds differently, it may be shorter or longer for your baby.

University Medical Center of Eastern Carolina-Pitt County, written by: Kim Crickmore, RN, BSN, 1992