

What is Heart Valve Disease?

Heart valve disease is the name given to any malfunction or abnormality of one or more of the heart's four valves, affecting the blood flow through the heart. The condition is usually caused by wear, disease or damage of the heart valves.

Types of Heart Valve Disease

Valve stenosis or obstruction: When a valve is either exceptionally narrow (stenosis) or has a blockage.

Valve regurgitation or insufficiency: When a valve's leaflets fail to close completely, the valve itself can allow blood to backwash down through the valve (regurgitation).

Signs

- Shortness of breath
- Fainting
- Cough
- Chest tightness and/or pain
- Fatigue
- Lightheadedness or dizziness
- Irregular heartbeat

Diagnosis

A doctor will use a stethoscope to listen for the characteristic heart "murmur" or "click-murmur" which is usually the first indication of a heart valve disorder.

After initial diagnosis, an echocardiogram or another form of heart scan can be undertaken to understand the exact type of heart valve disease and its severity.

The earlier the diagnosis and treatment of heart valve disease, the better the prognosis. If you think you have a valve disease, talk to your doctor.

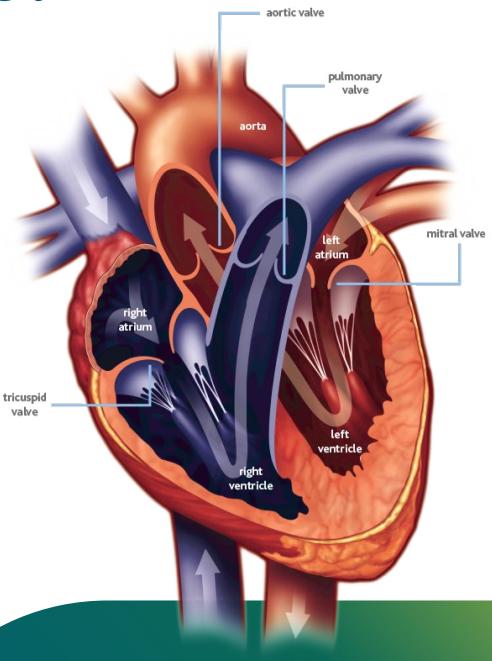


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About Heart Valves

We are born with four valves:

- Aortic
- Tricuspid
- Mitral
- Pulmonary

With each heartbeat, these valves open and close, allowing blood to move from the body, through the heart and back out to the body.

