



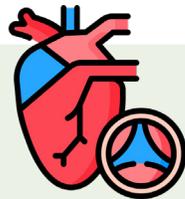
Heart Valve  
Voice US



# Women and Heart Valve Disease: Why Early Detection Matters

Each year, more than five million Americans are diagnosed with heart valve disease, yet women are more likely to be underdiagnosed and undertreated. Underrepresentation in clinical trials, delays in care and symptom differences contribute to missed or delayed diagnoses and poorer outcomes.

## What is Heart Valve Disease?



Heart valve disease occurs when one or more valves in the heart do not open or close properly, making it harder for the heart to pump blood. Over time, untreated valve disease can weaken the heart and lead to serious complications. The good news: when detected early, valve disease is treatable and manageable.

## Why Heart Valve Disease is Often Missed in Women?

- Symptoms may be atypical, or less obvious, and can develop slowly, leading to underdiagnosis.
- Aortic stenosis can appear differently in women, and the severity is often more underestimated.
- Fear of dismissal of symptoms discourage women from seeking care. More than two in five women worry their symptoms won't be taken seriously.

Because awareness is lower and symptoms are easier to dismiss as stress or aging, valve disease often progresses unnoticed – making early detection more critical.

## Symptoms You Shouldn't Ignore

Talk to your health provider if you experience:



Shortness of breath during everyday activities



Ongoing fatigue that affects daily life



Chest discomfort or pressure



Dizziness or fainting



Swelling in the legs, ankles, or feet



Rapid or irregular heartbeat

## Why Awareness and Early Detection Matters

When women recognize symptoms and advocate for appropriate testing, outcomes improve. Early detection can lead to:

- Closer monitoring before the disease worsens
- More treatment options available
- Lower risk of complications like heart failure or stroke
- Better long-term outcomes and quality of life



## How Heart Valve Disease Is Diagnosed

If valve disease is suspected, simple noninvasive tests can help confirm a diagnosis.



A physical exam, including listening to the heart



An echocardiogram, or ultrasound of the heart



Additional imaging or tests, if needed

Because women's symptoms may be subtle, asking for an echocardiogram is a practical step that often detects valve disease symptoms before they become severe.



## Take Charge of Your Heart Valve Health

Listen to your body. If something doesn't feel right, ask about heart valve disease – and ask your doctor about an echocardiogram if appropriate. Bring this checklist to your visit:

Questions to ask your clinician:

- Could my symptoms be related to a heart valve problem?
- Should I have my echocardiogram to check my valves?
- If I have valve disease, what are my treatment options?

**Listen to Your Heart – And Make Sure Others Do, Too.**