

Talking with Your Doctor About Valve Disease



Things to Discuss *if You Think You May Have Valve Disease*



Heart valve diseases involve damage to one or more of the heart's four valves. While some types are not serious, others can lead to major complications—including death. Fortunately, valve disease can usually be successfully treated with valve surgery in patients of all ages.

While many patients with valve disease have symptoms, others may not—even if their disease is severe. The only way to really know if you have the disease is to be diagnosed by a doctor, so see yours right away if you have been told that you have a heart murmur or if you think you may be experiencing symptoms of valve disease. Read this fact sheet to learn more about causes, risk factors, and symptoms.

At your visit, make sure you share the following information with your doctor:

- Your medical history including previous illnesses, diseases, and conditions
- Family history of disease (especially cardiovascular diseases)
- Medications you have taken and are currently taking
- Your lifestyle including diet, exercise, smoking, and drinking
- Symptoms you are experiencing
- If you have been told you have a heart murmur
- If you have been told you have a bicuspid valve or other valve abnormality
- Any other reasons you think you may have valve disease

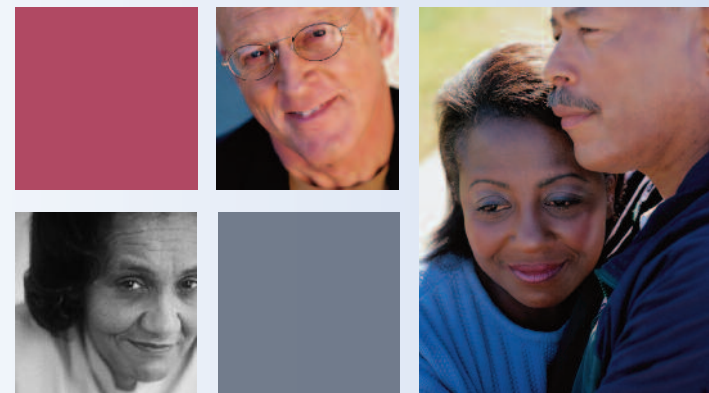
Questions to ask:

- Am I at risk for valve disease?
- Are my symptoms caused by valve disease?
- What tests will you need to do to make a diagnosis?
- Should I see a cardiologist?
Remember that it's always a good idea to get a second opinion about diagnosis and treatment.

If your doctor diagnoses you with valve disease, see the next page of this document to learn about additional questions you should ask.

Things to Discuss *if You Have Been Diagnosed with Valve Disease*

Because valve disease can put you at risk of serious complications, if you have been diagnosed it's important that you see a doctor and find out right away if you need treatment. Read this fact sheet to learn more about going forward after a diagnosis, treatment and surgery, and additional resources.



Questions to ask:

- What type of valve disease do I have?
- What is the problem with my valve?
- How serious is it?
- Is it possible to know how I got it?
- Are there more tests that need to be done? What are they and how will they work?
- Do I need treatment or can we monitor it and wait?
- Are there any medications that can help me manage my symptoms?

If you know you need surgery:

- How soon do I need it?
- What are my different surgical options? Is there a minimally invasive option?
- Where can I find a good cardiac surgeon—any referrals?
- Am I a good candidate for surgery? What are my risks?
- What can I expect leading up to surgery?
- What can I expect during surgery?
- How will I feel after the surgery? How long will my recovery take?
- Will my symptoms go away after I have the surgery?

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