

STAY IN THE RACE

MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR DOCTOR VISIT

This discussion guide will help you to have an open conversation with your doctor about heart valve failure (severe aortic stenosis). This discussion guide is designed to help you start a conversation with your doctor about checking your heart valves. Print these pages, answer the questions, and bring them to your appointment and ask to get your heart valves checked.

How old are you?

Heart valve failure becomes more common as we age—especially for adults over 65 with certain health or lifestyle risk factors.

- I'm under 55
- I'm between 55-64
- I'm between 65-74
- I'm between 75-84
- I'm 85+

Have you ever been told you have a heart murmur?

- Yes, less than a year ago
- I have, but it's been a while
- No
- I'm not sure

Does your family have a history of heart valve conditions?

- Yes
- No
- I'm not sure

Which risk factors do you have?

Select all that apply.

- High blood pressure
- High cholesterol
- Coronary artery disease (you or a family member)
- Diabetes
- Chronic kidney disease
- Any heart condition (eg. bicuspid aortic valve)
- History of rheumatic fever
- Radiation treatment to the chest
- A family member with heart valve disease (eg. mitral valve prolapse, aortic stenosis)
- Life-threatening heart infection
- Autoimmune disorder, such as lupus
- None
- I'm not sure

Have you experienced any of the following?

Select all that apply.

- Shortness of breath during everyday activities
- Fatigue or decreased energy
- Dizziness or lightheadedness
- Chest discomfort
- Swelling in ankles or feet
- Slower pace or avoiding activities you used to enjoy
- None of the above*

* No symptoms doesn't mean no problem. That's why heart valve screenings are so important.

TALK WITH YOUR DOCTOR ABOUT YOUR RISK OF HEART VALVE FAILURE

Heart valve failure can develop over time—even before you notice symptoms. That’s why making a “pit stop” with your doctor to get your heart valves checked is important.

Understanding heart valve failure

Heart valve failure happens when your aortic valve doesn’t open properly, making it harder for blood to flow through the heart. Changes in your valve can often be found through screening, even before symptoms appear.

Know your risk level

Heart valve failure becomes more common after age 65, especially for people with certain health conditions or medical history. Knowing your risk can help you decide whether checking your heart valves makes sense.¹

Diagnosing heart valve failure

When your heart valve isn’t working properly, it can affect how blood flows through the heart. Your doctor may listen for signs like a heart murmur and, if detected, recommend an echocardiogram (echo) to check how well your valves are opening and closing.

ASK YOUR DOCTOR TO CHECK YOUR VALVES

Checking your heart valves can help identify signs of heart valve failure, even before symptoms appear.


Find out if you have a heart murmur

It is important that your doctor is listening to your heart with a stethoscope at every appointment. If your doctor hears a heart murmur, it may be a sign of a heart valve problem, such as becoming stiff or leaky over time. Your doctor may recommend an echocardiogram (echo) to take a closer look.

Ask your doctor to schedule an echocardiogram

An echocardiogram is one of the most accurate ways to test for heart valve failure. Don’t worry, it’s painless and takes as little as 20 minutes.

Add any questions, notes, or symptoms



Reference: 1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. About Valvular Heart Disease. Accessed at <https://www.cdc.gov/heart-disease/about/valvular-heart-disease.html> on May 28 2024.

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