

What is a heart valve disorder?

The heart has four valves which work together to keep blood flowing in the right direction. They are the tricuspid, pulmonic, mitral, and aortic valves. They are made of thin tissue and open and close easily.

A heart valve disorder means that one or more of your heart valves does not work properly. It may either not open all the way or be unable to close completely. When a valve opening narrows (called stenosis), the valve does not open all the way, so the heart has to work harder to pump blood to the body. When a valve does not close completely between heartbeats, blood can move backward in the heart (called regurgitation). This means the heart must work harder to pump more blood than normal with each beat.

Valves that don't work right put extra strain on the heart. A valve may not be working well because it is damaged by disease or because it was abnormal at birth.

Testing

Testing may include:

- An ECG (also called an EKG or electrocardiogram), which measures and records your heartbeat.
- A chest X-ray to check if your heart is bigger than normal and if there is extra fluid or other problems in your lungs
- Ultrasound (echocardiogram), which uses sound waves and their echoes passed through your body from a small device that is held against your skin to create pictures of the inside of your heart to look at your heart valves, blood flow, and how well your heart muscle is pumping
- Heart catheterization (coronary angiogram), which is a series of X-rays taken after your healthcare provider injects contrast dye into your blood vessels to look for areas where the contrast dye may be leaking out of a blood vessel or blocked blood vessels
- Stress test, which is an ECG while you exercise on a treadmill. If you are unable to exercise, you will be given a medicine that increases the work of your heart to measure your heart's response. This test will help your provider decide what treatments and physical activities are best for

you or may be needed in the future.

Treatment

The treatment for a heart valve disorder depends on the type of valve disorder, how severe it is, and how well you respond to treatment.

- Your provider may prescribe medicine to:
 - Prevent blood clots
 - Reduce fluid build-up and swelling in the body
 - Reduce blood pressure, slow the heart rate, and reduce the workload of the heart
 - Help your heart muscle beat stronger and regularly
 - Treat or prevent an infection
 - Replace minerals your body loses when taking certain medicines to treat your condition
- Your provider may recommend other types of therapy to help relieve pain, other symptoms, or side effects of treatment.
- You may need surgery to treat your heart valve disorder. Surgery may include:
 - Valve repair: Surgery to fix the heart valve disorder by sewing holes or tears in the valve tissue, separating valve tissue that is stuck together, or widening the opening in the valve (valvuloplasty). Sometimes valve repair is done along with a procedure in which your healthcare provider inserts a balloon catheter (a flexible tube) into a valve in your heart to repair or widen it.
 - Valve replacement is surgery to replace your heart valve with an artificial valve. Selection of the type of heart valve by your healthcare provider depends on your age or other medical conditions. Two types of artificial heart valves are available:
 - Mechanical valves: Heart valves that are made from man-made (synthetic) materials
 - Biological valves: Heart valves that are made from pig, cow, or donated human tissue

What can I do to help?

- You will need to tell your healthcare team if you have new or worsening:
 - Chest pain or pressure, squeezing, or fullness in the center of your chest that lasts more than a few minutes, or goes away and comes back (may feel like indigestion or heartburn)
 - Pain or discomfort in one or both arms or shoulders, or in your back, neck, jaw, or stomach
 - Trouble breathing
 - Breaking out in a cold sweat for no known reason
 - Along with the previous symptoms, feeling very tired, faint, or sick to your stomach
 - Feeling like your heart is beating too fast, too slow, or skipping beats
 - Swelling in your feet, ankles, or legs, or abdominal bloating, or swollen hands or face
 - Chest discomfort when lying down
 - Dizziness or lightheadedness
 - Signs of infection around your surgical wound if you had surgery. These include:
 - The area around your wound is more red or painful
 - Your wound area is very warm to touch
 - You have blood, pus, or other fluid coming from the wound area
 - You have chills or muscle aches
- Ask questions about any medicine or treatment or information that you do not understand.

This content is reviewed periodically and is subject to change as new health information becomes available. The information is intended to inform and educate and is not a replacement for medical evaluation, advice, diagnosis or treatment by a healthcare professional.

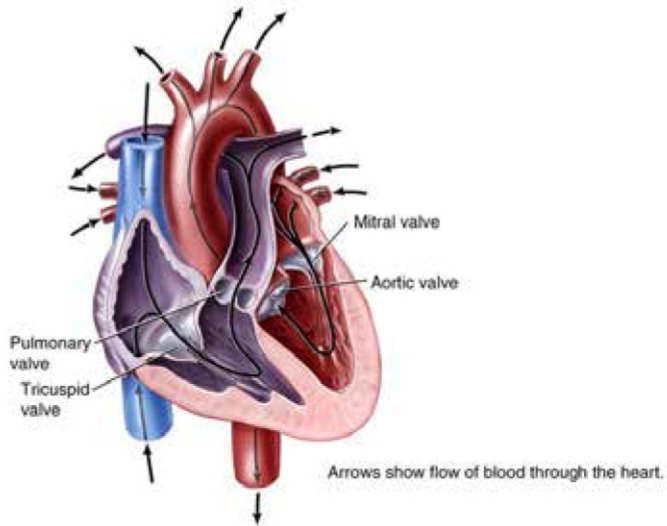
Artificial Heart Valves



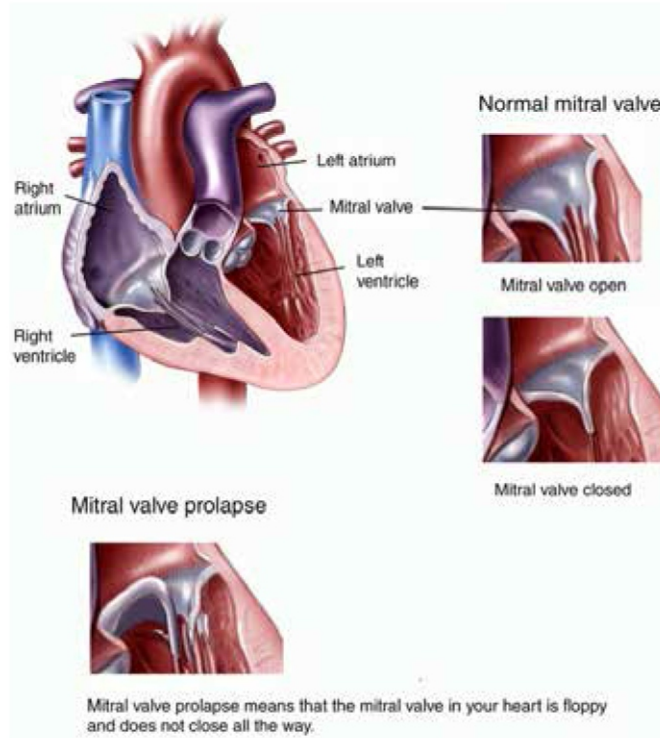
Example of a mechanical valve



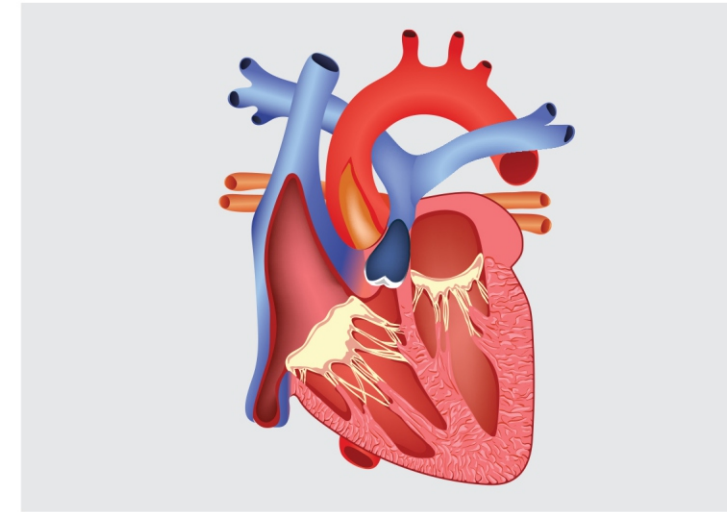
Example of a tissue valve



Mitral Valve Prolapse



HEART VALVE DISORDERS



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