

VALVULAR HEART DISEASE

(Heart Valve Disease)

NOLENSVILLE FAMILY MEDICINE
JOHN R. THOMPSON M.D.
615-776-8088



BASIC INFORMATION

DESCRIPTION

A complication of diseases that distort or destroy valves of the heart. The heart has four valves. The mitral and tricuspid valves (main heart valves) control blood flow into the ventricles. The aortic and pulmonic valves control blood flow out of the heart. The proper functioning of the valves is vital to the heart as a pump.

FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- No symptoms (sometimes).
- Fatigue and weakness.
- Dizziness or fainting.
- Chest pain.
- Shortness of breath, which may wake you out of a sleep.
- Lung congestion.
- Heart-rhythm problems.

CAUSES

Narrowed valves (stenosis) can obstruct blood flow. Widened or scarred valves allow blood to leak backward into the heart (insufficiency). The disorder may be inherited or caused by a variety of medical problems.

RISK INCREASES WITH

- Persons over 60.
- Family history of heart-valve disease.
- Pregnancy.
- Rheumatic fever.
- A complication of strep throat.
- Atherosclerosis.
- High blood pressure.
- Congenital (being born with) heart defects.
- Endocarditis (heart inflammation).
- Intravenous (IV) drug abuse.
- Syphilis (rare).
- Marfan's syndrome.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- Obtain medical care for diseases that cause heart-valve damage, such as high blood pressure, endocarditis, and syphilis.
- Take antibiotics, if prescribed, for streptococcal infections to prevent rheumatic fever.
- If you have a family history of congenital heart disease, obtain genetic counseling before starting a family.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Depends on the underlying condition. Many complications of valvular disease can be controlled with treatment.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

- Infection of the valves.
- Congestive heart failure.



DIAGNOSIS & TREATMENT

GENERAL MEASURES

- Your health care provider will do a physical exam. Medical tests may include blood tests, electrocardiogram (which measures electrical activity of the heart), echocardiogram (uses sound waves to examine the heart), and x-rays of the heart, lungs, and blood flow (called angiography).
- Surgery may be recommended to repair a heart valve or to remove a diseased or damaged valve. It may be replaced by a mechanical valve, one made from human or bovine tissue, or a human valve from a donor.
- Tell any doctor, dentist, or anesthesiologist who treats you that you have heart-valve disease. Remind those involved, even if you think they know the details of your medical history.
- To learn more: American Heart Association, 7272 Greenville Ave., Dallas, TX 75231; (800) 242-8721; website: www.americanheart.org.

MEDICATIONS

- You may be prescribed:
 - Antibiotics to treat or prevent bacterial infection of abnormal heart valves.
 - Antiarrhythmic drugs or digitalis drugs for the heart.
 - Anticoagulants (blood thinners) after surgery.

ACTIVITY

You will be advised about any limits. Sometimes, no limits are needed with certain forms of the disease.

DIET

You may be advised to eat a low-fat, low-salt diet.



NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

- You or a family member has symptoms of heart-valve disease.
- During treatment, signs of infection develop, such as fever, chills, muscle aches, headache, fatigue, and a general ill feeling.

Special notes:

More notes on the back of this page