

The Basics of Heart Valve Disease

What is Heart Valve Disease?

The flow of blood through the heart is controlled by four valves: the pulmonary, the tricuspid, the mitral, and the aortic. Each valve is a one-way passage, letting blood in, and closing completely to ensure blood flows in one direction through the valve. **Heart valve disease** is a dysfunction in one or more of these valves. The three basic types of heart valve problems include:

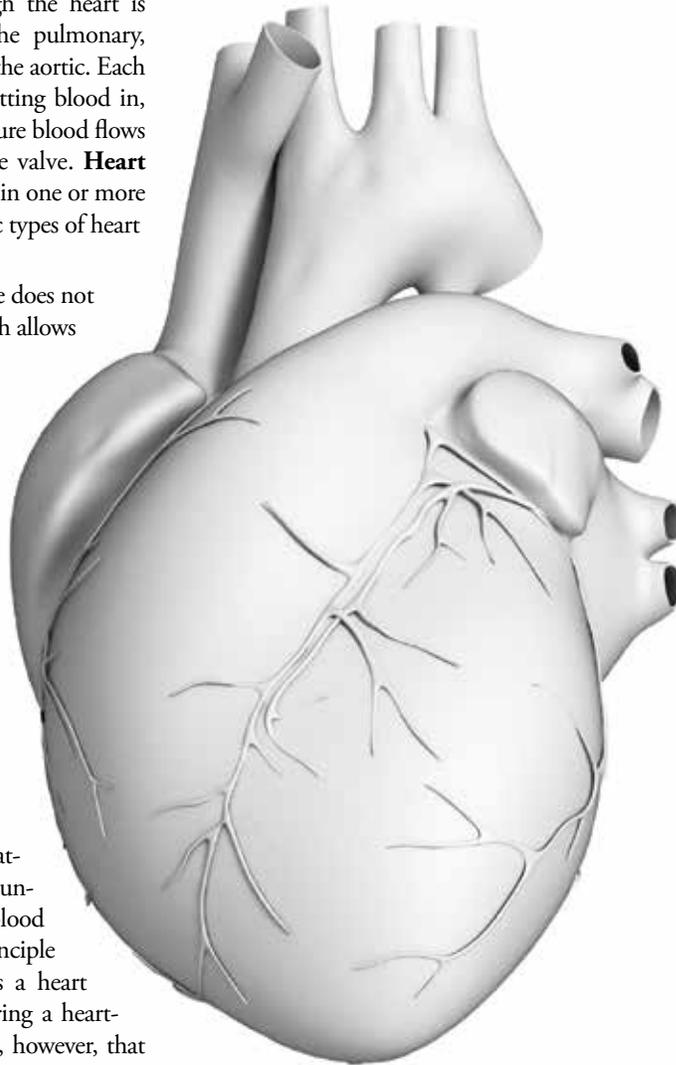
- *Regurgitation*, when a valve does not close tightly enough, which allows the backflow of blood.
- *Stenosis*, when the flaps of a valve fuse together or become too thick or stiff. This keeps the valve from fully opening, which restricts the flow of blood through the heart.
- *Atresia*, when a valve simply lacks an opening through which blood can pass.

Signs and symptoms

It is crucial to receive treatment for heart valve disease—untreated, it can lead to stroke, blood clots, or heart attack. The principle sign of heart valve disease is a heart murmur (an extra sound during a heart-beat). It is important to note, however, that not everyone with a heart murmur turns out to have heart valve disease. Other symptoms of heart valve disease include unusual fatigue, shortness of breath, swelling in the ankles, and even chest pain and fainting.

Treatment and prevention

Depending on the type of heart valve disease, surgery may be required for treatment. While there is currently no medicine that



cures heart valve disease, certain medications and lifestyle changes can treat the symptoms and significantly delay complications. A healthy diet, frequent exercise, and not smoking can all help relieve the symptoms and protect the heart valves from damage. ♥

EXPERT ADVICE

Valve Disease

Hear valve disease includes four different types – aortic valve disease, mitral valve disease, pulmonary valve disease and tricuspid valve disease.

Aortic Valve Disease is a condition in which the valve between the main pumping chamber of your heart and the main artery to your body doesn't function properly.

Mitral Valve Disease occurs when the valve between the left heart chambers doesn't function properly.

Tricuspid Valve Disease is a condition in which the valve between the right heart chambers doesn't function properly.

Pulmonary Valve Disease refers to any disorder of your heart's pulmonary valve, which is responsible for keeping blood from your heart flowing properly to your lungs.

Source: Mayo Clinic