



# Make the most of YOUR DOCTOR VISIT

This discussion guide will help you to have an open conversation with your doctor about heart valve disease. Start by answering the questions below and bring both pages with you to your next appointment. Be sure to ask your doctor about getting a heart valve screening during your visit.



## How old are you?

If you are over the age of 65, heart valve disease can be a risk factor, especially if your lifestyle habits also raise your risk.

- 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 awhile
- No
- I'm not sure



## Does your family have a history of heart valve conditions?

- Yes
- No
- I'm not sure



## Have you ever had an ultrasound of your heart, which is called an echocardiogram (echo)?

- Yes, less than a year ago
- I have, but it's been awhile
- 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



## Which of the following lifestyle choices apply to you? Select all that apply.

- Lack of physical activity (sedentary lifestyle)
- Unhealthy eating patterns
- Smoking
- Obesity
- None of the above

# Talk with your doctor about your risk of heart valve disease

Heart valve disease doesn't always come with symptoms at first, so it's important that you tell your doctor the whole story, including your medical history.



## Understand heart valve disease

About 2.5% of Americans (especially older adults) have heart valve disease. Nearly 25,000 people die each year from heart valve disease in the United States.<sup>1</sup>



## Know your risk level

Common causes of heart valve disease include rheumatic fever, heart attack, high blood pressure, a congenital heart valve problem, getting older, aortic aneurysm, heart failure, or an infection in your heart.<sup>1</sup>



## Diagnosing heart valve disease

When your doctor performs an examination, they should listen to your heart with a stethoscope. They should be looking for any signs of heart valve disease. These signs can include a heart murmur, which could mean blood is moving through a narrowed or leaky valve, swelling in your ankles, fluid in your lungs, or an enlarged heart.

# Ask your doctor about a heart valve screening



## Find out if you have an abnormal 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 a leaky valve, that has developed as you have gotten older. Your doctor should refer you for an echocardiogram (echo) to see if it is something more serious. Echocardiogram is the standard diagnostic test for heart valve disease.



## Ask your doctor to schedule an echocardiogram

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



## Keep your regular appointments with your doctor

If you've been diagnosed with heart valve disease, ongoing conversations with your doctor are important since heart valve disease may get worse over time.

## Add any questions, notes, or symptoms

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**Reference:** 1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Valvular Heart Disease. Accessed at [https://www.cdc.gov/heartdisease/valvular\\_disease.htm#print](https://www.cdc.gov/heartdisease/valvular_disease.htm#print) on Sep 14 2023.