



# Know Your Risk and Symptoms for Heart Valve Disease



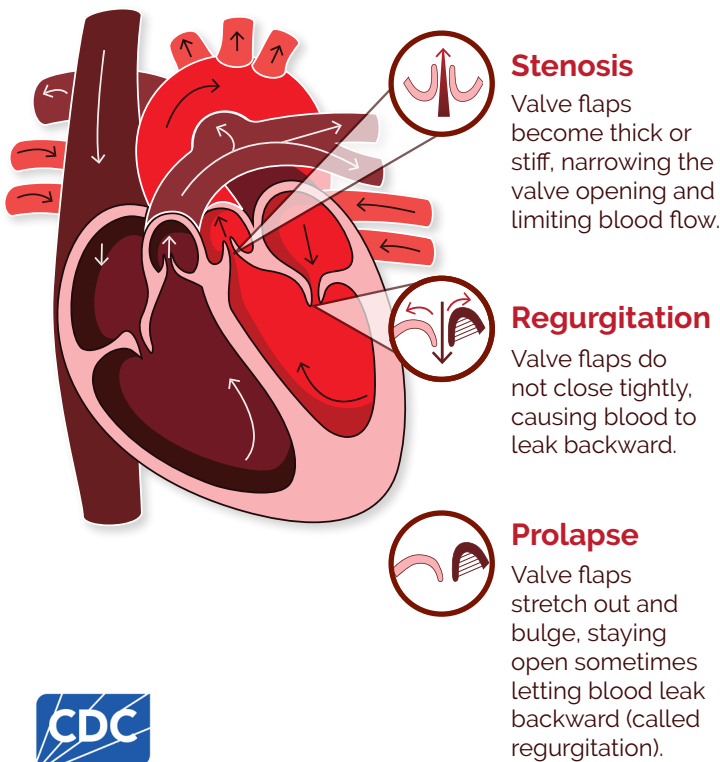
## What is Heart Valve Disease?

Heart valve disease occurs when at least one of your heart valves doesn't work properly.

### A Healthy Heart

Your heart has four chambers and four heart valves. Each valve has flaps that open only one way, allowing the blood to flow in just one direction with each heartbeat. Normal valves alternate opening and closing during these cardiac cycles.

Heart valve disease commonly involves one of these conditions:



**Heart valve disease can make your heart work harder** and can lead to an irregular heartbeat, infection, pulmonary hypertension (high blood pressure affecting the lungs or in the lung blood vessels), heart failure, or cardiac arrest when the heart stops beating.

## What are the symptoms of heart valve disease?

Heart valve disease symptoms can appear suddenly or develop slowly, without obvious symptoms, making early detection especially important.



You may feel short of breath.



You may run a fever.



You may have pain in your chest.



You may notice swelling in your feet/ankles or elsewhere.



You may feel extra tired, especially during exercise.



You may gain weight quickly.



You may experience dizziness or fainting.



You may experience an irregular heartbeat.



Visit [CDC.gov/KnowYourHeart](https://www.cdc.gov/KnowYourHeart) for heart valve disease resources and information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

## What puts me at a higher risk for heart valve disease?

**Getting older** puts us all at risk, especially for people 65 and up, as some heart valves may wear out over time. Other risk factors include:

- Certain **infections**, including rheumatic fever and blood infections
- A **heart valve that is shaped differently from normal** from birth, sometimes called a congenital malformation
- **Family history** of heart valve defects
- **Heart failure or heart attack**
- **Heart disease risk factors** such as hypertension, high cholesterol, diabetes, smoking, and obesity
- Some **autoimmune** diseases
- **Radiation** exposure and chemotherapy

## Can I protect myself from getting heart valve disease?

Yes! To reduce your risk, it is important to:

- **Know your heart.** If something feels different from usual, make an appointment with your health care team to discuss your symptoms, risks, and family health history. An echocardiogram or other scan can identify heart valve disease.
- **Eat well** and move more.
- Quit **smoking** and avoid using **intravenous drugs**.
- Manage your **stress**.

## Heart Valve Disease by the Numbers

In the United States:



**3 out of 4** U.S. adults know little to nothing about heart valve disease.



**More than 5 million** new cases of heart valve disease are diagnosed each year.



**Nearly 28,000** people die of heart valve disease each year.



You have **4 heart valves** at risk of heart valve disease—and **1 heart** to protect.

## Early diagnosis is key!

Ask your health care team to listen to your heart with a stethoscope to check for signs of heart valve disease.



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