

Treatment for Aortic Valve Regurgitation



Aortic valve regurgitation is when the aortic valve leaks. The aortic valve is 1 of the 4 heart valves. It's on the left side of the heart and sits between the left lower chamber (ventricle) and the large blood vessel that sends blood to the body (aorta).

Types of treatment

Treatment depends on the cause of your condition and how severe it is.

Mild to moderate aortic valve regurgitation with no symptoms and normal heart function and size may be treated with:

- **Regular monitoring.** This includes regular checkups and testing of your heart to check the degree of leaking and how well the chambers of your heart are working.
- **Risk factor management.** Aggressive management of conditions that can cause aortic valve disease, such as high blood pressure, is advised. Your healthcare provider may prescribe certain blood pressure medicines such as ACE (angiotensin-converting enzyme) inhibitors or calcium channel blockers.

You may need surgery if you have severe aortic valve regurgitation, especially if you have symptoms, heart function is reduced, or your heart is enlarged.

- **Surgery.** Most often the aortic valve will be replaced with either a mechanical or tissue valve depending on your age and other conditions. In rare cases, the valve may be repaired instead of replaced. Part of the aortic root may also be replaced with a graft if needed. The aortic root is the part of the valve that is closest to and attached to the heart.
 - If you get a mechanical aortic valve, your provider may prescribe a blood thinner to prevent the valve from developing blood clots.
 - If you have any type of valve replacement, you will need to take antibiotics before certain procedures to reduce the risk for heart valve infection.
- **Medicines.** For some people who can't have surgery, medicines such as ACE inhibitors or calcium channel blockers may be used to ease some of the pressure on the heart. If you have heart failure, medicines such as diuretics (water pills) are used to prevent fluid retention.

Acute severe aortic valve regurgitation is a medical emergency. Surgery is often done right away.

An infection of the heart valves can cause acute mild valve regurgitation. You may only need antibiotic medicine for the infection.

Possible complications of aortic valve regurgitation

Possible complications of aortic valve regurgitation can include:

- Heart failure
- Bulging or weakening of the aorta (aortic aneurysm)
- Bacterial infection of the heart valves
- Problems from valve replacement surgery
- Sudden death

To reduce the risk for complications, you may be given medicines such as:

- Blood thinners to prevent blood clots if you've had valve surgery.
- Antibiotics before some medical and dental procedures to prevent infections
- Medicines to help the heart pump

Living with aortic valve regurgitation

See your healthcare provider for regular checkups. Call right away if your symptoms change. Make sure to:

- Watch for symptoms when you exercise. Early symptoms may be noticed during exercise or activity.
- Talk with your healthcare provider about exercise and physical activity.
- Tell all of your healthcare providers including your dentist about your condition.
- Eat a low-salt, heart-healthy diet. This helps lower blood pressure and reduce the stress on your heart.
- Limit, or stop, alcohol, caffeine, and over-the-counter decongestants. This will reduce the risk for irregular heartbeat (arrhythmias).
- Use a cholesterol-lowering medicine, if prescribed.
- Stop smoking. Talk with your healthcare provider if you need help to stop.

Preventing aortic valve regurgitation

There are some things that you can do to help prevent aortic valve regurgitation. They include:

- Managing high blood pressure with lifestyle and medicine
- Having a sore throat checked for strep bacteria
- Taking a full course of antibiotic medicine for any strep infection exactly as your healthcare provider tells you to

When to call your healthcare provider

Call your healthcare provider right away if any of these occur:

- Paler than normal skin
- Mild dizziness or lightheadedness
- Mild, or slowly worsening, shortness of breath

Your provider may advise a change in medicines or possibly surgery, or a prompt evaluation.

Call 911

Have someone call **911** right away if you have:

- Sudden, severe, or quickly worsening shortness of breath
- A fast or abnormal heartbeat
- Abnormal pain in your chest, shoulder, arm, neck, or upper back
- Severe dizziness

- Fainting (loss of consciousness)
- Low blood pressure

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