

Heart valve diseases:

In heart valve disease, one or more of the valves in your heart is affected. Your heart has four valves that keep blood flowing in the correct direction. In some cases, one or more of the valves don't open or close properly. This can cause the blood flow through your heart to your body to be disrupted.

Symptoms:

Mild to moderate heart valve disease may not cause any symptoms. These are the most common symptoms of heart valve disease:

- Shortness of breath
- Chest pain
- Palpitations caused by irregular heartbeats
- Fatigue
- Dizziness
- Low or high blood pressure, depending on which valve disease is present
- Leg swelling
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During clinical examination, your doctor may hear a whooshing sound (heart murmur) with the stethoscope



Causes:

The causes of heart valve damage vary depending on the type of disease present, and may include the following:

- Rheumatic heart disease
- Aging and calcification
- Coronary syndromes
- Infective endocarditis
- Congenital defects
- Myxomatous degeneration (an inherited connective tissue disorder that weakens the heart valve tissue)

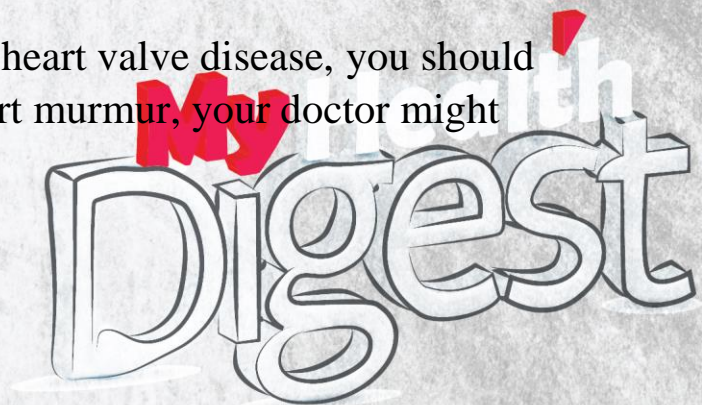
Risk Factors:

Several factors can increase your risk of heart valve disease, including:

- Older age
- History of infections that affected the heart
- History of certain forms of heart disease or heart attack
- High blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes and other heart disease risk factors
- Heart conditions present at birth (congenital heart disease)

When you should visit the Doctor?

If you have symptoms that might suggest heart valve disease, you should check with your doctor. If you have a heart murmur, your doctor might suggest that you see a cardiologist.



Complications:

Heart valve disease can cause many complications, including:

- Heart failure
- Stroke
- Blood clots
- Heart rhythm abnormalities
- Death

Treatment:

In some cases, your doctor may just want to closely watch the heart valve problem for a period. However, other options include medications, or intervention (either catheter based or surgical) to repair or replace the valve. Treatment varies, depending on the type of heart valve disease.

