

# Heart valve disease presenting in adults: investigation and management

Information for the public

Published: 17 November 2021

[www.nice.org.uk](http://www.nice.org.uk)

## Heart valve disease: the care you should expect

The heart has 4 valves that control the blood flowing in and out of the heart. Heart valve disease means that one or more of these valves is not working as it should, and this can put a strain on the heart. Sometimes, babies are born with a heart valve problem or heart valve disease can develop later in life, and many older people have it without knowing. It can make people feel short of breath, tired or weak and dizzy. It can also cause palpitations (a fluttering or thumping feeling in the chest) and swollen feet and ankles. When heart valve disease is diagnosed, treatment is not always needed straightaway, but careful monitoring is still needed to avoid the risk of damage to the heart.

We want this guideline to make a difference to people with heart valve disease by making sure:

- people get good information and support to help them discuss and agree with their doctor how to manage their heart valve disease
- people are offered check-ups often enough to spot any heart changes without causing extra anxiety
- specialist care is only offered to people who need it, saving unnecessary referrals.

## Making decisions together

Decisions about treatment and care are best when they are made together. Your healthcare professionals should give you clear information, talk with you about your options and listen carefully to your views and concerns.

To help you make decisions, think about:

- What matters most to you – what do you want to get out of any treatment?
- What are you most worried about – are there risks or downsides to treatments that worry you more than others?
- How will the treatment affect your day to day life?
- What happens if you don't want to have treatment?

If you need more support to understand the information you are given, tell your healthcare professional.

Read more about [making decisions about your care](#).

## Where can I find out more?

The NHS website has more information about heart valve disease and its treatment, including [mitral valve problems](#) and [aortic valve replacement](#).

The organisations below can give you more advice and support.

- [British Heart Foundation](#), 0300 330 3311
- [Heart Valve Voice](#), 07398619216
- [Pumping Marvellous Foundation](#), 01772 796542
- [Somerville Heart Foundation](#), 0300 015 1998

NICE is not responsible for the content of these websites.

To share an experience of care you have received, contact your local [Healthwatch](#).

We wrote this guideline with people who have been affected by heart valve disease and staff who treat and support them. All the decisions are based on the best research available.

ISBN: 978-1-4731-4302-9