

it can be treated with medication, or you may not need treatment at all. But in some cases, your doctor may recommend surgery to repair or replace it to prevent damage to your heart.

## 2. Can you die from a leaky heart valve?

A leaky valve doesn't close the way it should, allowing some blood to flow backward into the left atrium. If left untreated, a leaky valve could lead to heart failure. Left untreated, severe mitral valve regurgitation can cause heart failure or heart rhythm problems (arrhythmias).

## 3. How will the doctor decide the best treatment for me?

Based on the type of valve disease, the degree of damage, your medical history, and age, the doctor will suggest the best treatment option to you.

## 4. Do I need both surgery and medication?

While in the initial stages medication alone may be helpful, it would be beneficial to combine surgery and medication as the disease gets worse. In fact, the doctor may suggest that surgery is beneficial in certain cases during the initial stages.

## 5. How long will my valve last after repair or replacement?

Several factors determine the duration for which your valve will last. These include factors like the type of surgery, your health at the time of surgery, care taken after the surgery. Mechanical valves rarely wear out and need replacement only if their working is hindered by blood clots, infection, or tissue growth. Biological valves, however, may need replacement, especially in younger patients.

## 6. Will I need to take medications after surgery?

Depending on the type of surgery you undergo, your medication needs may differ after surgery. You need to stay on blood thinners (anticoagulants) for the rest of your life after surgery to prevent formation of blood clots, if you have a mechanical heart valve. However, in case of a biological valve or valve repair surgery, anticoagulants may be needed for several weeks after surgery, or maybe not at all.

## 7. Is there any risk of major complications after surgery?

Risks are involved in all surgeries and depend on many factors such as your age, any medical conditions you have, and the number of procedures done in a single operation. Your consultant will talk to you about these risks before your surgery and you should not hesitate from asking questions to have a clear understanding of all potential risks and the necessity of the recommended procedure.

**Book an Appointment**  
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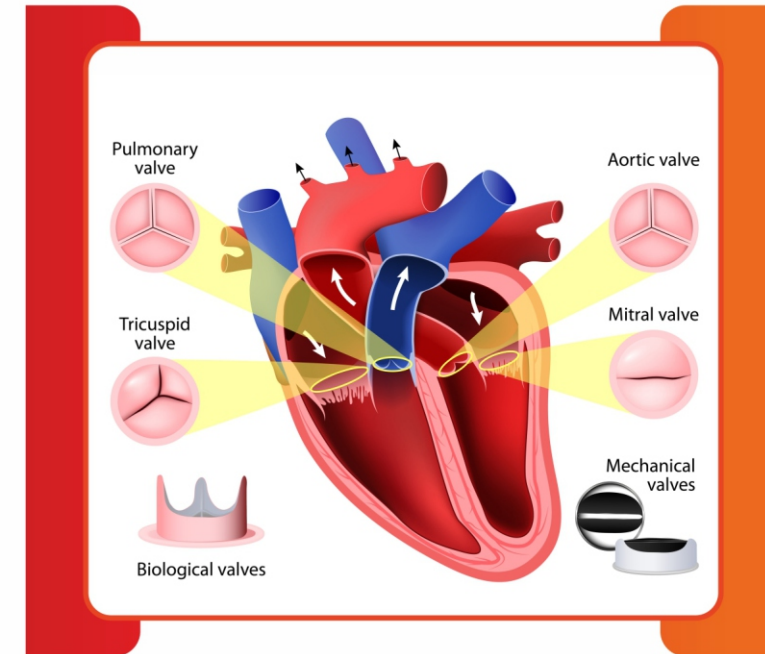
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**CARDIOLOGY**  
**Valvular Heart Disease (VHD)**

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## How do heart valves work?

Heart valves lie at the exit of each of your four heart chambers and maintain one-way blood flow through your heart. The four heart valves make sure that blood always flows freely in a forward direction and that there is no backward leakage.

## What is valvular heart disease (VHD)?

VHD is a condition that involves defect in or damage to either one or more of the four heart valves (aortic, bicuspid, pulmonary, tricuspid)

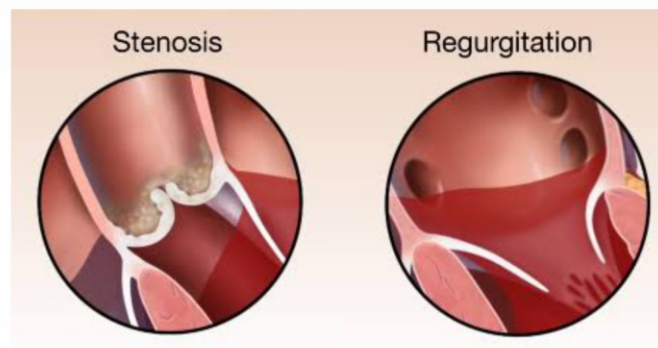
## What are the common types of VHD?

### ► Valvular stenosis or narrowed heart valve:

This occurs when a valve opening is smaller than normal due to stiff or fused leaflets. The narrowed opening may make the heart work very hard to pump blood through it and lead to heart failure and other symptoms. All four valves can be stenotic (hardened, restricting blood flow); the conditions are called tricuspid stenosis, pulmonic stenosis, mitral stenosis or aortic stenosis.

### ► Valvular insufficiency, incompetency, regurgitation, or “leaky heart valve”:

This occurs when a valve does not close tightly. If the valves do not seal, some blood will leak backwards across the valve. As the leak worsens, the heart has to work harder to make up for the leaky valve, and less blood may flow to the rest of the body. Depending on which valve is affected, the condition is called tricuspid regurgitation, pulmonary regurgitation, mitral regurgitation or aortic regurgitation.



## What are the causes of VHD?

- At birth (congenital)
- Degeneration with age
- High blood pressure
- Heart attack
- Blockage of blood vessels
- Rheumatic fever
- Bacterial endocarditis
- Disorders like carcinoid tumours, rheumatoid arthritis, systemic lupus erythematosus, or syphilis
- Medications such as Methysergide (for migraine headaches) and some diet drugs
- Radiation therapy

## What are the symptoms of VHD?

- Shortness of breath
- Wheezing after limited physical exertion
- Swelling around feet or ankles (oedema)
- Tiredness
- Feeling of heart pounding in chest (palpitations)
- Chest pain
- Dizziness or fainting (with aortic stenosis)
- Fever (with bacterial endocarditis)
- Rapid weight gain

## Prevention of VHD

- In case of a sore throat that lasts longer than 48 hours and is accompanied by a fever, rheumatic fever can be ruled out by timely administration of antibiotics
- Quit smoking and alcohol
- Eat healthy, balanced diet low in salt and fat
- Manage weight and exercise regularly
- Control blood sugar and cholesterol

## Diagnosis to confirm VHD

- Electrocardiogram (ECG or EKG)
- Echocardiogram (Echo)
- Stress testing (treadmill tests)
- Chest X-rays
- Radionucleotide scans
- Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI)
- Cardiac catheterization

## Treatment of VHD

- Follow a heart-healthy lifestyle as given for prevention
- “Wait and watch” in case of mild or asymptomatic cases
- Medications, mainly antibiotics, antithrombotic medications, anticoagulants, etc. as recommended by doctor
- Balloon dilatation (BPV/BMV/ BAV)
- Value repair or replacement surgery (either mechanical or biological valves may be used for replacement)

## Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. Can heart valve repair itself?

A leaky heart valve can happen suddenly or it may develop slowly over many years. If it's a minor issue,