

# WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT AORTIC STENOSIS

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## What Is Aortic Stenosis?

Blood travels from the heart through the aortic valve to the rest of your body. If you have aortic stenosis, the heart has trouble pumping blood the way it normally does because the aortic valve does not open fully. This makes it more difficult for the heart to supply your body with the blood it needs. There is no cure for aortic stenosis, but it can be managed. If left untreated, it can lead to heart failure or death. Aortic stenosis can be something that you are born with or something that you develop. Factors that may increase your risk include:

- Smoking
- High blood pressure
- High cholesterol
- Older age
- Family history

## What Are the Warning Signs?

Symptoms may include:

- Chest pains with exercise or strong emotions
- Trouble breathing
- Feeling faint or fainting

Symptoms usually do not occur until aortic stenosis is advanced. Earlier stages can be recognized when a physical examination detects an abnormal heart sound.

## How Is It Diagnosed?

- Your doctor will talk with you about any symptoms you may have.
- He or she will also examine your heart using a stethoscope to listen for any abnormal heart sounds.
- In many cases, your doctor will also order a test that uses sound waves to create a video of your aortic valve in action.

## How Is It Treated?

If you have aortic stenosis, you should have regular checkups with your doctor. The management of aortic stenosis includes:

- Avoiding demanding sports and other hard physical activity



- Using medication to maximize the heart's ability to pump blood
- Replacing the damaged valve, either during surgery or by using a catheter threaded into the heart through an artery

## Questions for My Doctor

- Am I at risk for aortic stenosis?
- Do I need to change what I eat and drink?
- Should I worry about any of the medicines I'm currently taking?
- Can I still do all the things I like to do?
- What kind of exercise can I do?
- Is surgery the right option for me?
- When should I go to the emergency room?

## Bottom Line

Aortic stenosis happens when the aortic valve in your heart does not open fully. This makes it harder for your heart to pump blood into your body. Aortic stenosis can lead to heart failure or death.

People with early aortic stenosis usually do not have symptoms. Symptoms include chest pains, trouble breathing, or feeling faint or fainting. Aortic stenosis cannot be fixed with medicines, but they can help relieve some symptoms. Once symptoms develop, it usually is necessary to replace the aortic valve, but the patient and doctor should work together to decide what is best.

## For More Information



### MedlinePlus

<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000178.htm>

### American Heart Association

[www.heart.org/HEARTORG/Conditions/More/HeartValveProblem-sandDisease/Problem-Aortic-Valve-Stenosis\\_UCM\\_450437\\_Article.jsp#.WBeG\\_S0rKJA](http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/Conditions/More/HeartValveProblem-sandDisease/Problem-Aortic-Valve-Stenosis_UCM_450437_Article.jsp#.WBeG_S0rKJA)