



Aortic Stenosis (Aortic Valve Stenosis)



Overview

This is a narrowing of the heart's aortic valve. That's the valve that opens to the aorta (the main vessel that carries blood from the heart to the body). With stenosis, the valve doesn't fully open. That makes it hard for your heart to pump enough blood out to your body.

Causes

In some people, aortic stenosis is present at birth. A healthy aortic valve has three flaps (called "cusps"). But you may be born with a valve that only has one or two cusps. That can keep it from opening fully. Aortic stenosis can also develop over time. Calcium in your blood can build up on the valve. Scar tissue can form on the valve as a result of disease. These can interfere with its function.

Symptoms

You can have aortic stenosis and not realize it. It can cause a heart murmur, so your doctor may discover it by listening to your heart. It can also cause symptoms. In infants and children, it can cause them to tire easily. They may feed poorly and fail to gain weight. And they may have breathing problems. In older people, it can cause pain in the chest, neck and jaw. It can make you feel tired, weak, dizzy and faint when you exercise. Your heart may beat quickly, and you may find it hard to catch your breath when you are active. You may cough.

Treatment

Treatment depends on the severity of your stenosis. You may be able to manage it with regular checkups, medications and by limiting strenuous activity. If your stenosis is severe, you may need a catheter procedure or surgery to repair or replace the valve. Your healthcare provider can create a plan that's right for you.

