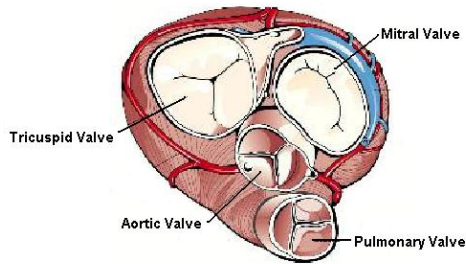


## **Heart Valve Repair/Replacement**

### **How does a heart valve work?**

Your heart valves act like a one way doors, making sure blood flows through the heart in the proper direction at all times.

### **What can go wrong with my heart valve?**



There are two common problems that can happen with your valve. It can become thickened, stiff or deformed and not open as easily as it should ([stenosis](#)), or it may not close tightly enough to form a complete seal thus allowing some blood to flow in the

wrong direction ([insufficient](#) or [regurgitation](#)).

### **What causes these problems?**

Your valves can become ineffective due to a birth defect, age, lifestyle choices or infection. Sometimes your valves can be injured by trauma, or from a heart attack.

### **What are the warning signs of heart valve problems?**

You may experience a change in your ability to participate in activities, excessive fatigue, fainting, shortness of breath, heart rhythm problems or chest pain.

### **How are valve problems diagnosed?**

Your doctor may be able to detect a change in your valves by listening to your heart. If this occurs, more diagnostic tests such as an [angiogram](#), [echocardiogram](#) and various forms of [Magnetic Resonance Imaging \(MRI\)](#) may be ordered.

### **Can my heart valve be repaired?**

Depending on the degree and type of damage, sometimes your valve can be repaired. If this can not be accomplished it will be replaced.

### **How can my heart valve be repaired?**

Often a [valve ring](#) is sewn into place around the valve to recreate its original form. At other times your surgeon may simply remodel your damaged valve. In either case upon completion a [Trans-Esophageal Echocardiogram \(TEE\)](#) will be

done in the operating room to evaluate the results. If the repair was not adequate, your native valve will be removed and replaced with a prosthetic valve.

**What choices do I have when choosing a new heart valve?**

There are two choices for a prosthetic valve, a [bioprosthesis](#) or a [mechanical valve](#). Each has its advantages and disadvantages. Your age at time of surgery as well as your life style and other medical conditions will impact your choice. All possibilities will be discussed with your doctor before surgery.

**How long does a valve replacement/repair take?**

Depending on your particular circumstances a valve surgery can take from one to six hours. The surgery is performed while you are under [general anesthesia](#).

**What can I expect after I go home?**

As with any other open-heart surgery, you will have to perform daily incision care, keeping it clean and watching for any signs of infection. You will be restricted from lifting greater than ten pounds or driving a car for at least a month. Cardiac rehabilitation will be started in the hospital and should be continued on an outpatient basis once you get home.