



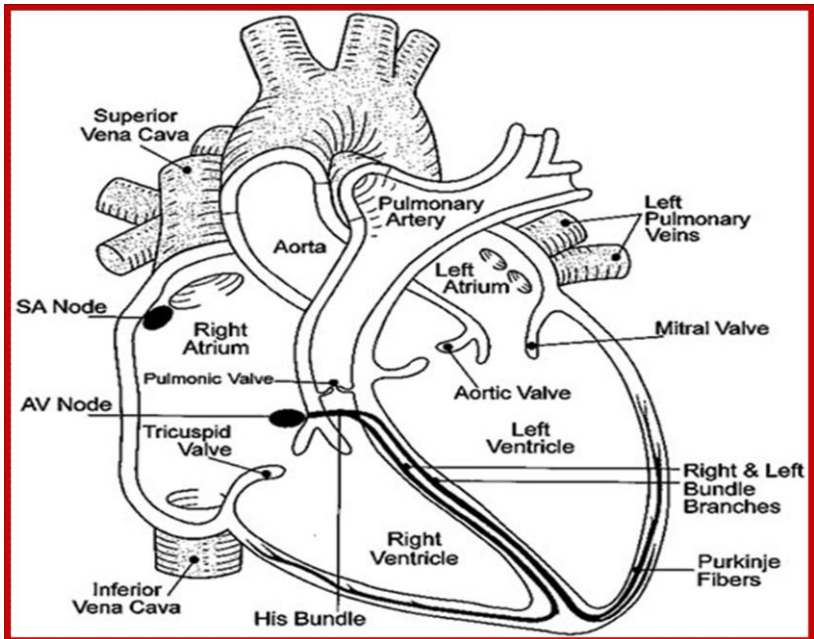
MILD VALVE DISEASE **DO NOT WORRY!**

Mild Valve disease is fairly common (for example, 20% of the over 55's have a mild leak of the mitral valve) which is well tolerated.

Problems with the heart valves may be caused by ischaemic heart disease (narrowing of the heart's arteries), the effects of rheumatic fever, the natural aging process or a birth defect.

There are two main problems that can arise with heart valves. If the valve does not open fully the flow of blood will be restricted: this is known as *stenosis*. If the valve does not close properly blood will leak backwards: this is known as *regurgitation*.

The most common cause of valve disease in the older population is a build up of calcium deposits which results in thickening of the valves so that they become stiff and cannot open or close fully. This is quite normal and happens to most of us as we get older.



Flow of blood through the heart:

Left Side

Left atrium



Mitral valve



Left ventricle



Aortic valve



Circulation around body

Right side

Right atrium



Tricuspid valve



Right ventricle



Pulmonary valve



Circulation around lungs

FOR MORE INFORMATION

If you have any further questions please contact:

The OxVALVE office

Telephone: (01865) 228927

Email: enquiries@oxvalve.nhs.uk

Website: www.oxvalve.nhs.uk

The British Heart Foundation

Website: bhf.org.uk

CAN I STILL HAVE SEX? Yes. As with exercise / sports, mild valve disease will not cause any problems when the heart needs to increase its work.

WILL I NEED AN OPERATION? Surgery or other invasive treatment is very unlikely. In the majority of cases, mild valve disease does not progress into anything more serious.

WILL I NEED MEDICATION? No. You should not require any additional medication.

HOW THE VALVES WORK

The heart consists of four chambers; two upper chambers (the atria) and two lower chambers (the ventricles). It is the ventricles that are responsible for pumping blood around the lungs and the rest of the body.

The flow of blood through the heart is controlled by four valves, which are made up of a few thin folds of tissue. The most important valves (the mitral and aortic valve) lie on the left side of the heart, which is responsible for pumping blood around the body. The heart valves are like one-way doors or lock gates, which open and close with each beat of the heart, allowing blood to pass from one chamber to the next. When functioning correctly, they allow blood to flow freely out of a chamber when open and prevent blood from flowing backwards into a chamber when closed.

WHAT SHOULD I DO NOW?

A small leak or obstruction to the flow of blood will not put any extra strain on the heart so it is unlikely that you will experience any symptoms. There is no need to alter your life-style and you can remain as active as you would like.

If you find in the future, however, that you start to experience symptoms (for example; breathlessness on effort, chest pain, dizziness or increased tiredness) please consult your GP.

As explained during your appointment, the OxVALVE Team will be in touch with you again shortly to invite you for a second scan at the John Radcliffe Hospital. You may then be invited for a further scan in 5 years time, after which you may never need another scan.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHAT DO I DO IF I NEED DENTAL TREATMENT?

Recent guidelines suggest that there is no need to take antibiotics before dental treatment in the presence of mild valve disease. Your dentist may recommend antibiotics for a serious dental or mouth infection, but this is nothing to do with the valve disease itself. Continuous good dental hygiene is enough to prevent any serious infection developing in the heart.

CAN I STILL TRAVEL? Yes. There should be no problem with travelling, either by car, train, boat or plane.

DO I NEED TO INFORM MY INSURANCE COMPANY?

No. You would only need to inform an insurance company if you are under hospital follow up by a Consultant or have significant symptoms related to your valve disease.

CAN I STILL PLAY SPORT? Yes. There is no reason to limit your normal physical activities.