



Preparing for an appointment

Your appointment is a good chance to discuss your ongoing condition with your doctor and discuss better ways of managing it. Here's how to make the most of every consult.

Monitor your symptoms

It's important for your doctor to know about any changing symptoms. This will allow your doctor to better treat and manage your condition. Common signs include:

- Shortness of breath
- Chest tightness and/or pain
- Extreme tiredness
- Dizziness or fainting
- Difficulty with physical activity

It can also help to talk about your symptoms with family and friends, as they may notice changes you have missed.

Keep a list of current medicines and tests

Keeping a list is important so all the doctors you see know which medicines you're taking and which medical tests you've had. Don't forget to include dosage of the medication, and any other supplements you take, like vitamins.

Write down your questions and concerns

It can be hard to remember all the questions you want to ask your doctor. So, in the days leading up to the appointment, be prepared and make a list. These questions could be about side effects of medicines, ways to improve your condition, or practical questions about your care. Write everything down. It can also be helpful to bring a friend or family member to be part of the discussion. Don't forget to write down the doctor's advice. This is where a support person can help after the appointment in case you miss something.

Examples of things to talk to your doctor about include:

1. *Telling your doctor how you're feeling. Try to be as specific as you can about changes in your symptoms. Give examples of how heart valve disease affects you in your daily life, such as:*

- I can't do activities I used to enjoy, like mowing the lawn or walking the dog, because I get tired easily
- When I walk up a flight of stairs, I get short of breath quickly
- I find that I get dizzy and lightheaded more often than I used to

2. *Some examples of questions you might want to ask your doctor include:*

- How do you think my heart valve disease will affect my daily activities, like walking to the shops, mowing the lawn, or baking?
- What can I expect with my heart valve disease over the next few months and years?
- What changes can I make in my life to help improve my condition?
- What are the possible side effects of my medicines or surgery?
- If my other health conditions affect my heart valve disease, what can I do?

Make a plan

It's worthwhile to work with your doctor to plan one to three things to work on before your next appointment. It could be a medical or a lifestyle improvement, but setting small goals can make a big difference, build confidence and give you something to aim for.

After your appointment

When you get home, look at your notes and update your family or friends about your appointment. The more they know about your health, the better they can support you.