

Bicuspid Aortic Valve

The left ventricle is the lower pumping chamber of the heart. The aorta is the large blood vessel that takes oxygen-rich blood out to the body. The aortic valve allows the blood to flow from the ventricle into the aorta. Most often, this valve has three leaflets. A bicuspid aortic valve only has two leaflets. It is not known why some people are born with only two. This does run in families.

Why does this matter?

The aortic valve's job is to fully open and close to send blood out to the body. With only two leaflets, it may not open and close like it should. When the valve does not open all the way, it is called stenosis, or narrowing. When the valve does not close all the way, it is called insufficiency, or leakage.

Testing

An echocardiogram is a heart ultrasound. It can find out if the valve is opening and closing like it should. Sometimes, with a bicuspid aortic valve, the aorta can increase in size. The test will also look at the aorta to see if it has increased. You will have this test done every 6 months, yearly, or every few years to watch for problems. Your doctor will decide how often one is needed.

What if my child has a bicuspid aortic valve?

Most children with a bicuspid valve do not have any problems when they are young. They do not need antibiotics before a visit with the dentist. For most people, activity is not restricted. Avoid exercises where you hold a muscle in a fixed position, (isometric). It's okay to do the exercises if you can keep breathing through them. Your doctor can explain more about this.

Later in life, the valve may need to be fixed. This will depend on how narrow the open valve is or how much the valve leaks. There are many options to fix the valve. You can discuss these options further with the doctor.

Who to Call

Pediatric Cardiology
(608) 263-6420

Adult Congenital Heart Disease
(608) 890-5700

If you are a patient receiving care at UnityPoint – Meriter, Swedish American or a health system outside of UW Health, please use the phone numbers provided in your discharge instructions for any questions or concerns.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 11/2020. University of Wisconsin Hospital and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#6866