

# Ask about your heart health

Could it be aortic stenosis?



**Clearly and accurately describing your symptoms to your GP and asking them to listen to your heart with a stethoscope can help identify aortic stenosis.**

**Why is it important for your GP to listen to your heart with a stethoscope during your appointment?**

Having a heart murmur could be a sign of aortic stenosis.<sup>1,2</sup> Your GP can check for a heart murmur by listening to your heart with a stethoscope.<sup>1</sup>

If your GP hears a heart murmur, they may refer you to a cardiologist for further tests to understand what is happening in your heart.



**NewHeartValve.co.uk**

by Edwards Lifesciences

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## Aortic stenosis is one of the most common heart valve diseases.<sup>3</sup>

It affects about  
1 out of 8 people  
over the age of 75.<sup>4</sup>



As it is a disease that gets worse over time and cannot be treated with medication, it is important you monitor your symptoms and tell your GP immediately if anything changes or worsens.

People who develop severe symptomatic aortic stenosis need to have their aortic valve replaced. Without treatment, survival rates for those with severe symptomatic aortic stenosis are as low as 50% at two years.<sup>3</sup>

### Two ways your GP can check if you are at risk of aortic stenosis



1. By listening to your heart with a stethoscope. If they hear a heart murmur, it could be a sign of aortic stenosis.

Ask your GP to listen to your heart with a stethoscope and check for a heart murmur



2. From your own monitoring and reporting of the symptoms of aortic stenosis. If you have any of the symptoms listed on the next page or have changed or slowed down your daily routine, this could be a sign of aortic stenosis<sup>5,6</sup> and it's important you tell your GP.

### Answer the questions on the next page to ask your GP to listen to your heart with a stethoscope and check for a heart murmur, a sign of aortic stenosis.

Help your GP understand your symptoms by printing off this document, answering the 5 questions on the following page (by ticking the relevant box) and take your answers to your appointment.

# Asking for your heart check

## 1. Why have you made this appointment?

I don't do as much as I used to because I...



... get out of breath easily



... start to feel tired



... get chest pain



... feel dizzy



... notice my heart beating quickly



I've noticed I have to stop walking to catch my breath



I get out of breath just walking up the stairs

When did you start to notice these symptoms?  
(e.g. a couple of weeks ago, doing a certain activity, someone pointed out it out to me)

Do they last all day or only at specific times?  
(e.g. only when walking or at night)

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# Asking for your heart check

## 1. Why have you made this appointment? *cont.*

My family / friends are worried about my health because they've noticed I'm...



... more breathless



... more tired



... less active



... I've fainted



my ankles and/or feet are swollen



I can be okay one minute and suddenly feel faint or dizzy the next

When did you start to notice these symptoms?  
(e.g. a couple of weeks ago, doing a certain activity, someone pointed out it out to me)

Do they last all day or only at specific times?  
(e.g. only when walking or at night)

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# Monitoring your symptoms

2. Have you experienced any of these symptoms in the past 6 months?

Less than usual    More than usual



Feeling tired/low energy



Shortness of breath (out of breath) after daily activities or while lying down



Feeling faint or dizzy



Swollen ankles and/or feet



Feel my heart skip a beat (flutter) or feel my heart beats quickly

If you have any of these symptoms and notice them change or worsen, tell your GP immediately.



Less than usual      More than usual



Chest pains



Difficulty walking short distances



I don't have any symptoms

If you have any other symptoms, please write them here:

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# Your heart history



3. Compared with 6 months ago, do you still do the daily activities and hobbies you have always enjoyed?

- Yes, my daily routine hasn't changed
- I have slowed down a bit, but I'm still active
- No, I used to do more



4. Do you have a family history of heart conditions?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure



5. Has a GP ever listened to your heart with a stethoscope?

- Yes, less than a year ago
- No
- Yes, more than a year ago
- Not sure

*If you answered yes to question 5:*

*Were you told you have a heart murmur?*

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

# Your heart check summary

Fill in the blanks below to help you plan your conversation:

**1. I have made the appointment because**

[insert your answer(s) from question 1] .....

.....

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**2. I have experienced these symptoms during the past 6 months**

[insert your answer(s) from question 2] .....

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.....

.....

**3. Compared with 6 months ago [insert your answer from question 3]**

.....

.....

.....

4. I have a family history of heart disease [tick the option that applies]

Yes    No    Not sure

5. My GP... [tick the option that applies]

... **has not listened to my heart with a stethoscope** in the last 6 months

If you ticked this option, ask your GP:

“Can you listen to my heart with a stethoscope and reassure me that you can’t hear a heart murmur?”

... **has listened to my heart with a stethoscope** in the last 6 months

If you ticked this option, ask your GP:

“The last time my heart was listened to with a stethoscope, **I was / was not / can’t remember if I was** [select one] told I have a heart murmur. Can you listen to it again and reassure me that you can’t hear a heart murmur?”

# During your GP appointment

## Questions to ask your GP

### About your symptoms

- What do my symptoms mean?
- How does my heart sound when you listen to it with a stethoscope?
- Do I have a heart murmur?
- How do I know if my symptoms are getting worse?
- What should I do if my symptoms get worse?
- Is there anything I can stop or avoid doing to make my symptoms better?
- How can I get back to doing the daily activities and hobbies that I've had to stop or reduce?
- I think I am experiencing one or more of the symptoms of aortic stenosis, what should I do?

### What happens next

- Do I need to come back and see you? If so, when?
- Do I need any tests?
- How is aortic stenosis diagnosed?
- What types of tests will I need to go through for diagnosis?
- Are there any activities I need to stop doing while I wait for my test results?
- How will I get the results?
- Who do I contact if I don't get the results?

## Preparing for your GP appointment over phone or video



**If your GP appointment is going to be over the phone or via video, there are simple steps you can take to make sure you get the most out of it.**

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## 1. Check whether it is a phone call or an online video call

- If you've been told it's a 'virtual appointment' or 'online consultation', or you've been sent a link to a website it's likely to be an online video call
- 



## 2. Pick a good spot

- Choose a quiet private place where you won't be disturbed and you feel comfortable
  - If it's a phone appointment, ensure your landline or mobile connection is working okay beforehand
  - If it's a video appointment, check your internet connection is strong
- 



## 3. Give yourself plenty of time to get comfortable and set up

- Turn on your computer, laptop, tablet or mobile phone ahead of the appointment
- 



## 4. Complete this sheet a day before your appointment and have it to hand

- You can use it to make sure you've covered everything you want to say and ask
- Remember, your GP can't do any physical checks during phone and video calls, so sharing as much as you can about your symptoms is really important

## Remember...

... don't be afraid to ask your GP to listen to your heart with a stethoscope



**“Could you listen to my heart and reassure me that I don't have a heart murmur?”**

... if you do not understand any words, ask the GP to write them down and explain them

... if your GP detects a heart murmur, before leaving your appointment check what happens next



**“As I have symptoms and a heart murmur, will I be sent for tests to check for aortic stenosis?”**

If your GP detects a heart murmur and refers you to a cardiologist – we've created a discussion guide to help you make the most of your hospital appointment:



For further information and to utilise our step-by-step guide, go to

**[www.newheartvalve.co.uk](http://www.newheartvalve.co.uk)**

References: 1. Grimard BH, Larson JM. *Am Fam Physician* 2008;78(6):717–724. 2. Nishimura RA, et al. *J Am Coll Cardiol* 2014;63(22):2438–2488. 3. Otto C. Timing of aortic valve surgery. *Heart* 2000;84(2):211–218. 4. Osnabrugge RLJ, et al. *J Am Coll Cardiol*. 2013;62(11):1002–1012. 5. American Heart Association. Aortic Stenosis Overview. Available at: <https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/heart-valve-problems-and-disease/heart-valve-problems-and-causes/problem-aortic-valve-stenosis> (accessed August 2021). 6. Mayo Clinic. Aortic valve regurgitation. Available at: <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/aortic-valve-regurgitation/symptoms-causes/syc-20353129> (accessed August 2021)

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