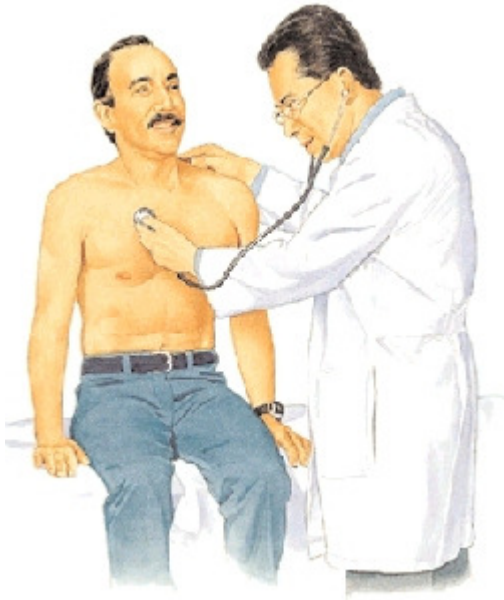


# Diagnosing Heart Valve Problems

Your doctor will ask you questions about your family and medical history. Certain tests may be done. These help diagnose your valve problem and rule out any other disease you may have.



## Listening to Your Heart

A problem with a heart valve will usually cause the heart to make a noise. Your doctor can hear this noise, called a **murmur**. But you can have a heart murmur and not have valve disease or any other heart problem. Other tests can help confirm the diagnosis of valve disease.



## Looking at Your Heart

An **echocardiogram** (echo) is a simple, painless test that bounces harmless sound waves off the heart. These sound waves become images on a video screen. Your doctor can then see a moving picture of your heart. This test shows how the valves work. It can confirm whether a valve is narrowed or leaking.

It can also show the size of the chambers and whether your heart muscle pumps normally. A special type of echo, called a **transesophageal echo (TEE)**, may be done as well. This test can provide even more detailed information about your heart valves. Echo testing can help your doctor monitor changes in your heart over time.

## **Other Tests**

Your doctor may order a **chest x-ray** for another look at your heart and lungs. You may have an **electrocardiogram**, a test that shows the rhythm of the heartbeat. You may have **cardiac catheterization**, a test to look inside the heart. This test helps measure the pressure in the chambers, checks for leaky valves, and looks for problems in the heart's arteries.