WHAT IS SEVERE AORTIC STENOSIS?

Aortic stenosis occurs when your valve narrows. It can be caused by a birth defect, rheumatic fever, or radiation therapy, or can be related to age. In elderly patients, severe aortic stenosis is sometimes caused by the build-up of calcium (mineral deposits) on the aortic valve’s leaflets. Over time the leaflets become stiff, reducing their ability to fully open and close. When the leaflets don’t fully open, your heart must work harder to push blood through the aortic valve to your body. Eventually, your heart gets weaker; increasing the risk of heart failure (your heart cannot supply enough blood to your body).

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF AORTIC STENOSIS?

If you have any of the following symptoms, tell your doctor or seek medical attention right away.

- **Chest pain:** A sensation of aching, burning, discomfort, fullness, pain or squeezing in the chest. It may also be felt in the arms, back, jaw, neck, shoulders and throat.
- **Rapid or irregular heartbeat**
- **Palpitations:** An uncomfortable awareness of the heart beating rapidly or irregularly.
- **Shortness of breath:** Feeling winded and tired when walking or lying down.
- **Fatigue**
- **Dizziness after periods of inactivity**
- **Fainting:** A sudden and brief loss of consciousness.

These may be warning signs of advanced aortic stenosis. Without medication or aortic valve replacement, you may be at risk for sudden heart failure. It is important to remember, however, that heart valve disease often occurs with no outward symptoms and may go undetected.

Severe aortic stenosis is a very serious problem. Without treatment, half of the people who feel sick from this problem die within an average of 2 years.

To learn more about aortic stenosis, please ask your doctor.