

Bicuspid Aortic Valve Disease

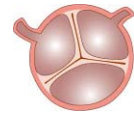
What is it? Bicuspid aortic valve disease, a genetic condition, is present at birth. In addition to the aortic valve and possibly the mitral valve in the heart, it may affect connective tissue in the aorta, other blood vessels, and areas through out the body.



Bicuspid Aortic Valve
(open)



Bicuspid Aortic Valve
(closed)



Normal (trileaflet) aortic valve
(closed)

The aortic valve opens and closes as the heart beats, sending oxygen-rich blood into the aorta (the largest artery) where it begins its journey through out the body. In the normal heart, the aortic valve has three leaflets. A bicuspid aortic valve has only two and is prone to developing leakage (regurgitation), narrowing (stenosis), or both.



Ascending Aortic Aneurysm

The aorta may also be abnormal. This is noticed when some of its tissue becomes weak, thin, and unable to hold its shape. When this abnormal tissue bulges to one and half times its normal size, it is called an aneurysm. In bicuspid aortic valve disease, the ascending aorta is most often affected. **Tearing (dissection) or rupture of the ascending aorta is a life-threatening emergency, usually accompanied by severe pain. CT scans with contrast, which are commonly available, can quickly detect aortic dissection or the presence of an aneurysm.**

Bicuspid aortic valve disease is associated with abnormal connective tissue through out the body in some individuals. Blood pressure may rise to high levels, especially with exercise or stress. Those with bicuspid aortic valves are also at greater risk of developing brain aneurysms than the general population.

Who is affected? Up to 2% of the population, more often males than females. This condition is inherited, and blood relatives should be screened once a bicuspid aortic valve is found in a family member.

How is it found? Both the heart valves and the aorta should be checked. The bicuspid aortic valve may be detected by echocardiogram. The entire aorta may be scanned using either CT or MRI with intravenous contrast.

How is it treated? The primary treatment for both the aortic valve and the aorta is surgery. Medications are used for blood pressure control.

***For additional information, please contact
Bicuspid Aortic Foundation
www.bicuspidfoundation.com (888) 310-HOPE (4673) or (949) 495-0027***

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