

Mitral Valve Prolapse

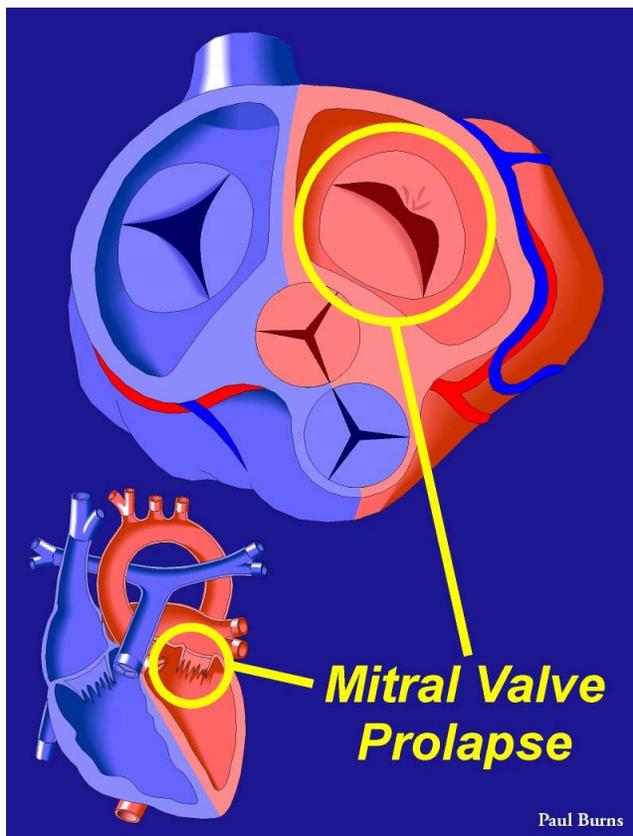


What Is It?

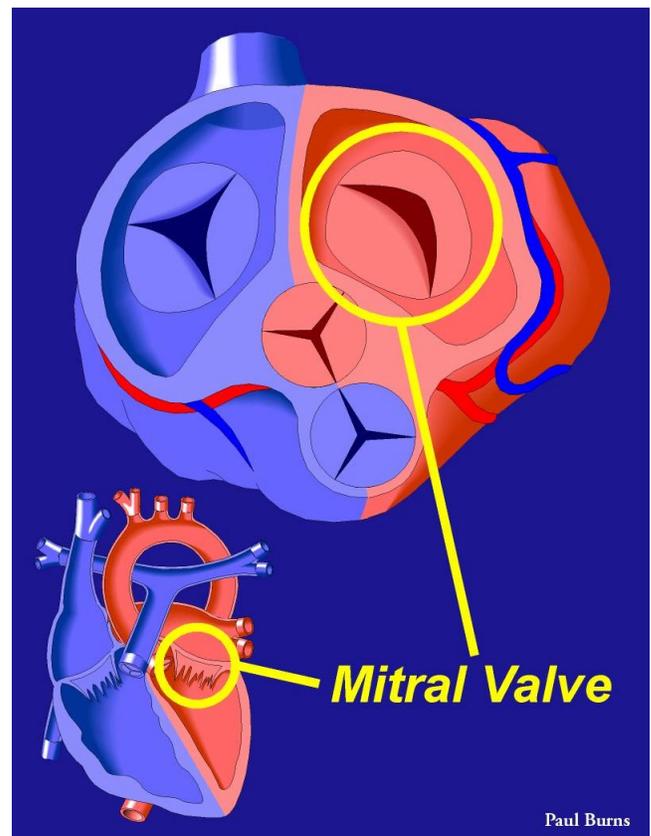
The Mitral Valve regulates the movement of blood from the left atrium, or left collecting chamber of the heart, into the left ventricle, the main pumping chamber of the heart, which pumps blood to the body.

In Mitral Valve Prolapse (also known as MVP), the valve is abnormally formed in such a way that the two valve leaflets (or flaps) are too large and bend backwards (prolapse) into the left atrium as the heart beats. The degree of prolapse is variable.

This is a fairly common heart defect, probably genetic in origin that affects about 2% of the population. It occurs in approximately twice as many girls as boys.



Mitral Valve Prolapse



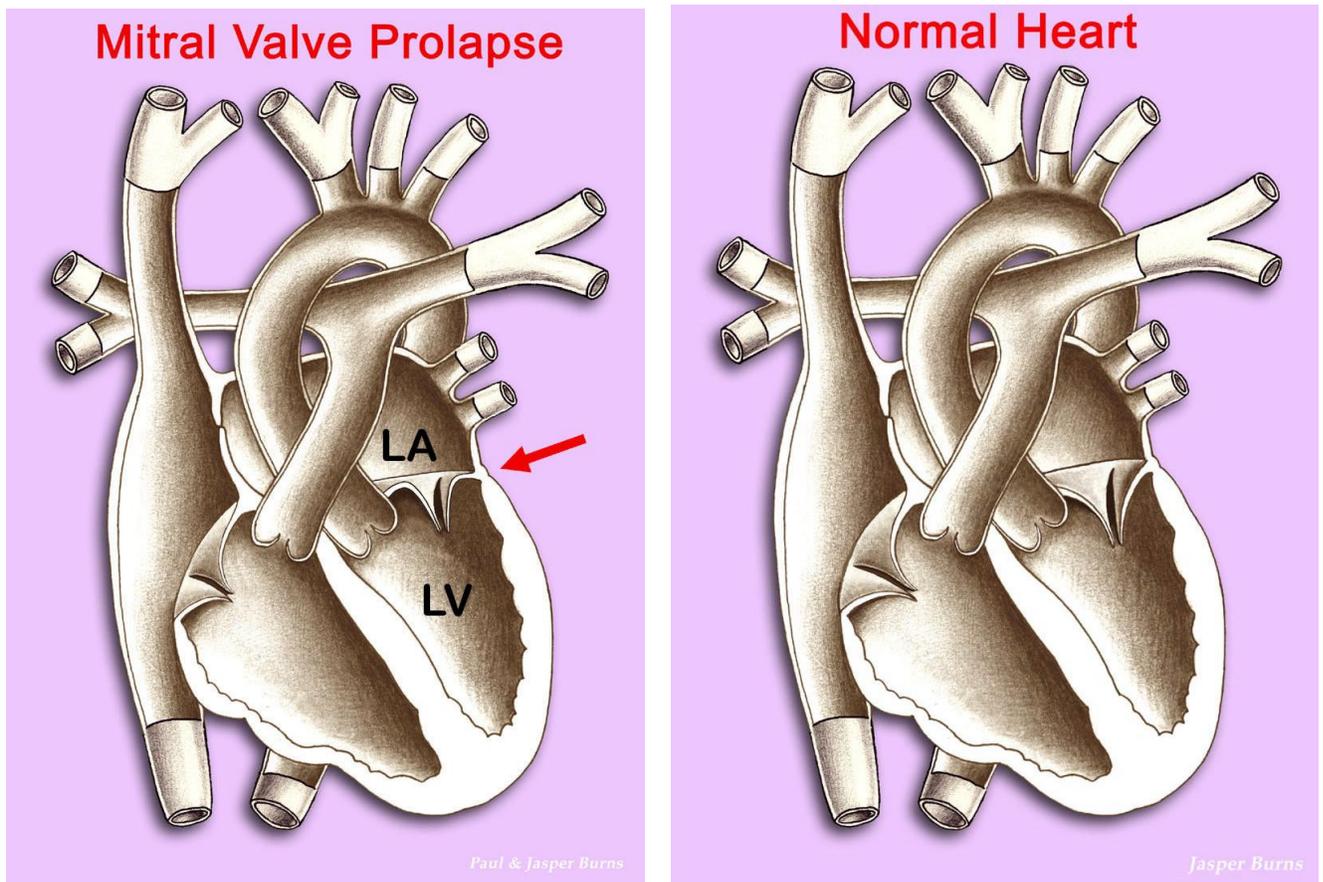
Normal Heart

What Are Its Effects?

If the amount of prolapse is significant, there may be a heart murmur (caused by the "flapping" of the oversized leaflets) and/or the leaking of blood at the mitral valve. Extreme leakage of blood may impede the movement of blood from the left atrium (LA) into the left ventricle (LV), resulting in mitral regurgitation (or mitral insufficiency).

In mitral regurgitation, a large amount of blood leaks back into the left atrium. This may cause the thickening or enlargement of the wall of that chamber because the heart has to pump more vigorously in order to compensate for the backflow of blood through the mitral valve.

Though Mitral Valve Prolapse is usually not serious, it may be accompanied by various minor symptoms, such as shortness of breath, tiredness, heart palpitations, chest pains, dizziness, headaches, and insomnia.



Notice That the Leaflets of the Mitral Valve Tend to Curve Upward Into the Left Atrium in This Defect.

LA = Left Atrium, LV = Left Ventricle

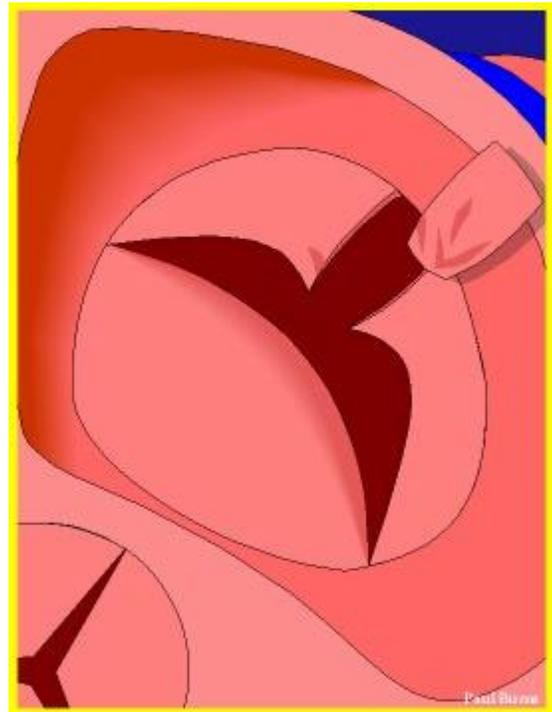
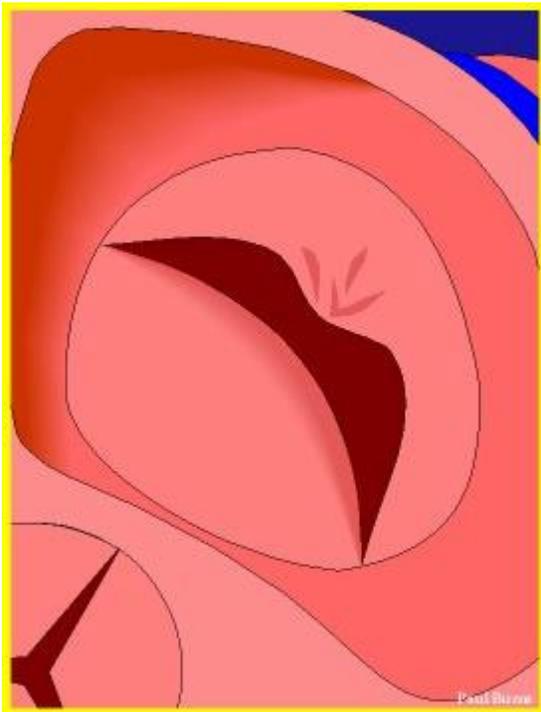
How Is It Treated?

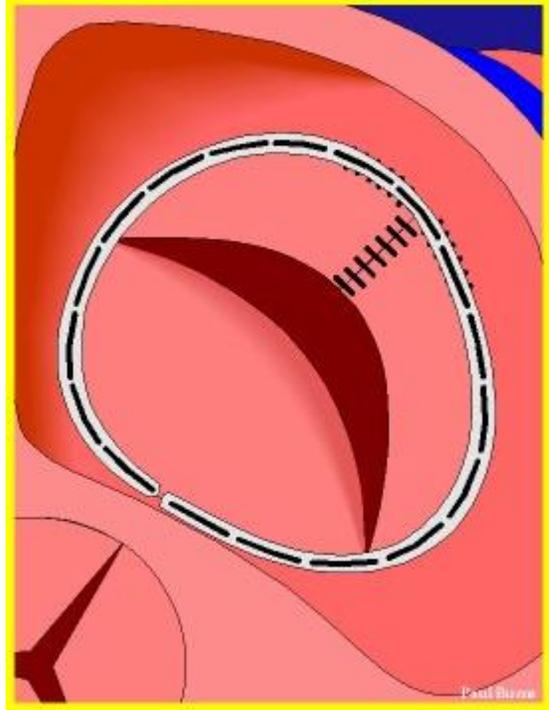
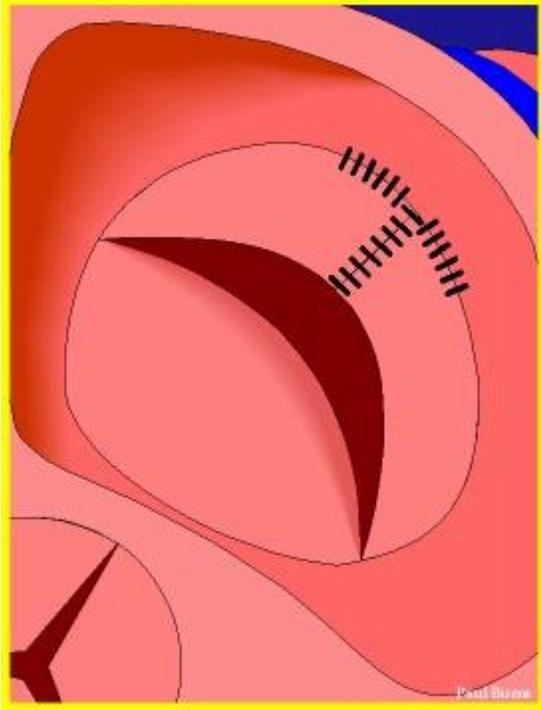
It is important for a person with Mitral Valve Prolapse to have the condition monitored regularly by a doctor. Care should be taken to avoid or immediately treat blood infections that could attack the heart's valves.

If the leakage at the mitral valve is minor, negative symptoms do not occur and no treatment is necessary. Sometimes, medications are prescribed to treat the mitral regurgitation.

In some cases, the mitral valve may be surgically corrected by removing the area of prolapse and suturing the remaining leaflet tissue to tighten the valve opening (see illustrations). Also, a ring may be sutured into position along the periphery of the valve to support the valve leaflets and discourage further prolapse (the white ring with black sutures in the bottom illustration).

In cases involving the significant leakage of blood, a valve replacement may be performed. (Please see under Mitral Stenosis for this procedure.) After this procedure, anticoagulants (blood thinners) may be prescribed to prevent blood clots from forming.





Surgical Repair of Mitral Valve Prolapse