

Mitral Valve Prolapse

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.

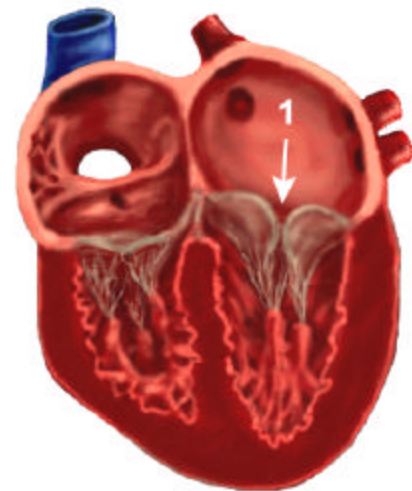
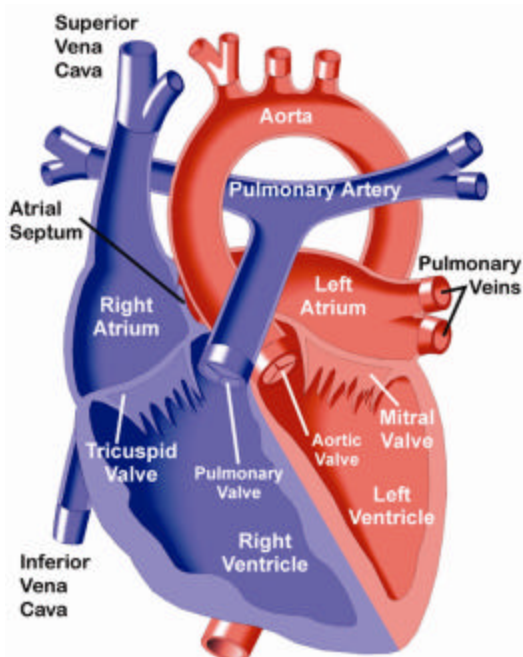
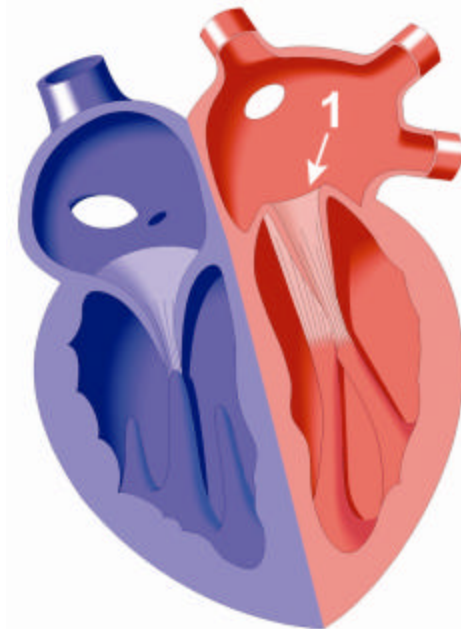
In Mitral Valve Prolapse (also known as MVP), the valve is abnormally formed in such a way that the two valve leaflets (or flaps) are too large and bend backwards (prolapse) into the left atrium as the heart beats. The degree of prolapse is variable. (In the diagram, notice that the leaflets of the mitral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

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.

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 (mitral regurgitation or insufficiency).

Mitral regurgitation is insignificant unless it progresses to moderate to severe insufficiency. 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. Most mitral insufficiency with mitral valve prolapse is mild.

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. The anomaly increases the risk of infective endocarditis (inflammation of the interior lining and/or the valves of the heart).



Top and Above:
1. Abnormal mitral valve.

Left: Normal Heart