



## **ABOUT THE DISEASE**

The mitral valve is a one-way valve that separates the upper and lower chambers on the left side of the heart. When functioning properly, this valve prevents blood from reverse flowing into the lungs when the heart beats. **Mitral valve disease** happens when this valve does not work correctly.

Although **mitral valve disease** most commonly affects small breed dogs, it can sometimes occur in larger dogs.

Many patients with **mitral valve disease** will have an audible heart murmur, but will never develop congestive heart failure.

If **mitral valve disease** worsens, then the valve will not close properly, allowing a small amount of blood to reverse flow into the lungs as well as compromise forward flow heart function.

Please see the [Congestive Heart Failure](#) document for additional information.

## **OBTAINING A DIAGNOSIS**

**Mitral valve disease** is usually first diagnosed by the detection of a heart murmur during a routine health examination.

X-rays (radiographs) can detect heart enlargement, but will not determine the severity of valve dysfunction.

An enzymatic test (proBNP) may help confirm the presence of heart disease, but will not necessarily determine severity.

An ultrasound of the heart (echocardiogram) is the preferred choice for confirmation of diagnosis and assessment of severity.

Complete blood work and urine testing will provide overall health status to help determine which medications will be appropriate.

## **TREATMENT**

Unfortunately, there is no cure for **mitral valve disease**, which means the goal is to manage the clinical symptoms and reduce secondary side effects of the disease.

Patients without symptoms require no treatment.

Patients with symptoms can be treated with medications that help control or eliminate those symptoms.

In addition to the medication outlined in the [Congestive Heart Failure](#) document, **mitral valve disease** patients may also receive:

- [Cardiac Glycoside](#) – (digoxin) help with abnormal/irregular heart rhythm (arrhythmias).

## **TIPS FOR SUCCESS**

- Lower-intensity, on-leash walks are best as long as the patient does not show signs of exhaustion or difficulty.
- Early detection and long term monitoring will maximize the ability to manage symptoms once they develop.