



February 21, 2011 – Grand Rapids, MI

## Valves

Did you know you have four valves in your heart? They just go about their business every time your heart beats. The valves are there for one reason: to prevent blood from flowing backward. Blood helps us only if it flows in one direction, whether it's arterial or venous blood. It needs to get to the lungs to get rid of carbon dioxide, pick up oxygen, get back to the heart, and then move out to the body. Blood has to move forward.

The valve between the left atria and ventricle is called the tricuspid or mitral valve. While they all can cause some leakage, it's this high-pressure side of the heart that seems to have the most problems. Mitral valve prolapse (MVP) used to be called a heart murmur; there's no known cause other than genetics. If it leaks too much, it has to be replaced.

People with MVP are prone to infections from a common bacteria found in the mouth. You wanted to know a great reason to floss every day? Now you have it: to protect your heart.

What are you prepared to do today?

*Dr. Chet*

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