



## Valvular Insufficiency

### General Information

The heart valves are one-way valves that allow blood to flow in one direction only (through the heart). If a valve does not close (valvular insufficiency), blood flows out of and then back into the heart. Valvular insufficiency may be present at birth (congenital) or can occur later because of disease.

It may affect the right, left or both sides of the heart. Signs of left-sided heart failure include difficult breathing, coughing and decreased stamina. With right-sided heart failure, signs include decreased appetite, weight loss, gradual abdominal enlargement, occasional vomiting and diarrhea and swollen limbs. In many cases, signs of both right and left heart failure are present.

### Important Points in Treatment

1. Many cases of valvular insufficiency can be successfully controlled for long periods with medication. A thorough physical examination, laboratory tests, chest and abdominal radiographs (x-rays) and electrocardiograms are necessary to devise a proper treatment program. In some cases, angiography and echocardiography are also needed.
2. *Medication:* Medication must be given in exact amounts and on time, especially for patients receiving digitalis or digitalis derivatives. Call the doctor if you cannot medicate your pet as directed.
3. Patients receiving diuretics (water pills) experience increased urgency to urinate. If your pet must be alone for long periods, discuss this problem with the doctor.
4. *Activity:* Allowable exercise varies with the severity of the disease. Follow the instructions checked.  
 Allow normal activity.  
 Restrict activity as follows: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. *Diet:* Follow the instructions checked.  
 Feed the normal diet.  
 Feed Prescription Diet h/d.  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
 Feed the above diet as follows: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Notify the Doctor if Any of the Following Occur

- Your pet's condition worsens or new problems develop.
- Your pet refuses to eat the recommended diet.
- You cannot give the medication as directed