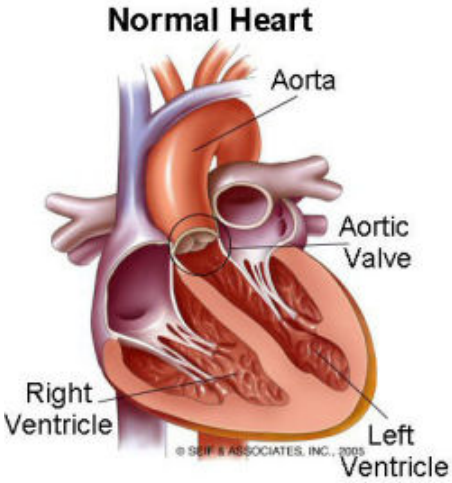
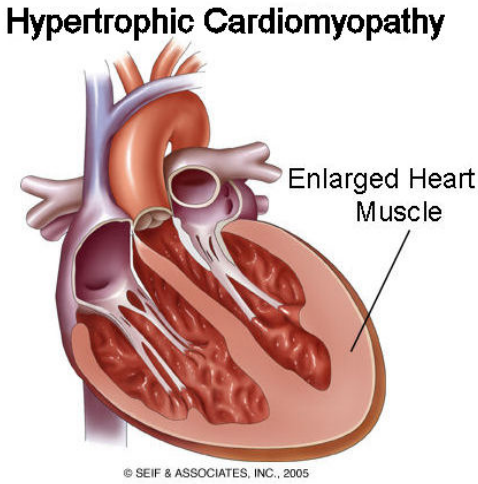
# Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy

The heart has four chambers to pump blood throughout the body. In hypertrophic cardiomyopathy (*HC*), the heart muscle becomes enlarged and thickened. The septum is the muscular part of the heart which separates the chambers. When the septum enlarges it takes up part of the heart chamber. This causes a decrease in blood flow.




A bigger septum affects the large left muscular chamber of the heart (*left ventricle*) and obstructs the blood flow. This may be called obstructive cardiomyopathy (*HOCM*). The degree of obstruction may vary and increase during exercise. **Young athletes with a family history of heart problems should be screened for this problem.**

This disease will get worse without treatment. As the heart work increases, so do the size of the muscles. Get medical treatment as soon as possible. This disease can result in sudden death, especially after exercise. Diagnosing the problem and treating it is important.




## SYMPTOMS

- Shortness of breath.
- Chest pain.
- Irregular or fast heart beats.
- Fainting (especially after exertion).

## DIAGNOSIS

Your caregiver will be able to determine what is wrong by taking a history to see what is bothering you and by doing a physical exam. Other tests may include:

- An EKG which is a recording of the electrical activity of the heart. With HOCM this may show an enlargement of the left ventricle (left ventricular hypertrophy).
- An echocardiogram may be done and is the test of choice for screening young athletes. It will usually show the enlargement of the left ventricle and slow filling of the chamber.
- A doppler test shows irregular flow and a pressure gradient change of both sides of the aortic valve. It also typically shows mitral regurgitation. This means that blood leaks backward through the mitral valve. This makes the heart work harder.

## TREATMENT

Your caregiver may prescribe medications to help this. Sometimes part of the heart septum may be removed with surgery or an alcohol ablation. In severe cases, pacemakers in both sides of the heart may be helpful in reducing the workload on the heart.

## PROGNOSIS

- Atrial fibrillation may occur. This is a condition where the top chambers of the heart have stopped beating in a normal regular fashion.
- Sudden death is another complication of untreated HC.

## SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You develop chest pain, sweating, or shortness of breath, especially during or after sports.
- You feel faint or pass out.

- You have trouble breathing even at rest.
- Your feet or ankles get swollen.
- You feel palpitations or abnormal heartbeats.

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