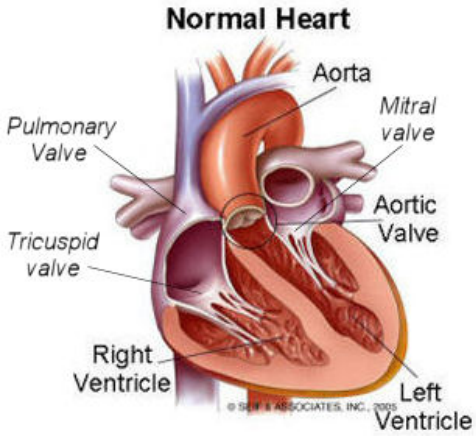
Cardiomyopathy, Heart Muscle Problems

Cardiomyopathy means a disease of the heart muscle. The heart muscle becomes enlarged or stiff. The heart is not able to pump enough blood or deliver enough oxygen to the body. This leads to heart failure and is the number one reason for heart transplants.



TYPES OF CARDIOMYOPATHY INCLUDE:

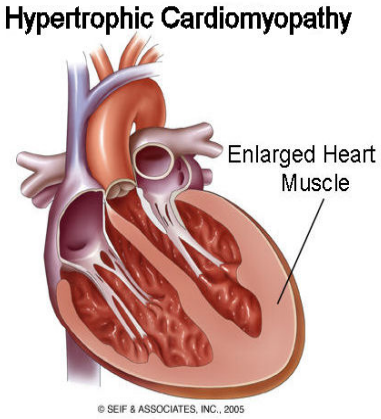
DILATED

The most common type. The heart muscle is stretched out and weak so there is less blood pumped out.

- Some causes:
  - Disease of the arteries of the heart (*ischemia*).
  - Heart attack with muscle scar.
  - Leaky or damaged valves.
  - After a viral illness.
  - Smoking.
  - High cholesterol.
  - Diabetes or overactive thyroid.
  - Alcohol or drug abuse.
  - High blood pressure.
- May be reversible.

HYPERTROPHIC

The heart muscle grows bigger so there is less room for blood in the ventricle, and not enough blood is pumped out.



- Causes include:
  - Mitral valve leaks.
  - Inherited tendency (from your family).
  - No explanation (*idiopathic*).
  - May be a cause of sudden death in young athletes with no symptoms.

RESTRICTIVE

The heart muscle becomes stiff, but not always larger. The heart has to work harder and will get weaker. Abnormal heart beats or rhythm (*arrhythmia)* are common.

- Some causes:
  - Diseases in other parts of the body which may produce abnormal deposits in the heart muscle.
  - Probably not inherited.
  - A result of radiation treatment for cancer.

SYMPTOMS OF ALL TYPES:

- Less able to exercise or tolerate physical activity.
- Palpitations.
- Irregular heart beat, heart arrhythmias.
- Shortness of breath, even at rest.
- Chest pain.
- Lightheadedness or fainting.

TREATMENTS:

- Life-style changes including reducing salt, lowering cholesterol, stop smoking.
- Manage contributing causes with medications.
- Medicines to help reduce the fluids in the body.
- An implanted cardioverter defibrillator (*ICD)* to improve heart function and correct arrhythmias.
- Medications to relax the blood vessels and make it easier for the heart to pump.

- Drugs that help regulate heart beat and improve heart relaxation, reducing the work of the heart.
- *Myomectomy* for patients with hypertrophic cardiomyopathy and severe problems. This is a surgical procedure that removes a portion of the thickened muscle wall in order to improve heart output and provide symptom relief.
- A heart transplant is an option in carefully applied circumstances.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You have severe chest pain, especially if the pain is crushing or pressure-like and spreads to the arms, back, neck, or jaw, or if you have sweating, feeling sick to your stomach (*nausea*), or shortness of breath. **THIS IS AN EMERGENCY**. **Do not** wait to see if the pain will go away. Get medical help at once. Call 0 (911 in U.S.) **DO NOT** drive yourself to the hospital.
- You develop severe shortness of breath.
- You begin to cough up bloody sputum.
- You are unable to sleep because you cannot breathe.
- You gain weight due to fluid retention.
- You develop painful swelling in your calf or leg.
- You feel your heart racing and it does not go away or happens when you are resting.

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