

Cardiomyopathy

Definition

Cardiomyopathy is a weakening of the heart muscle or a change in the heart muscle. It often occurs when the heart cannot pump as well as it should, or with other heart function problems.

Most patients with cardiomyopathy have heart failure.

Causes

Common types of cardiomyopathy include:

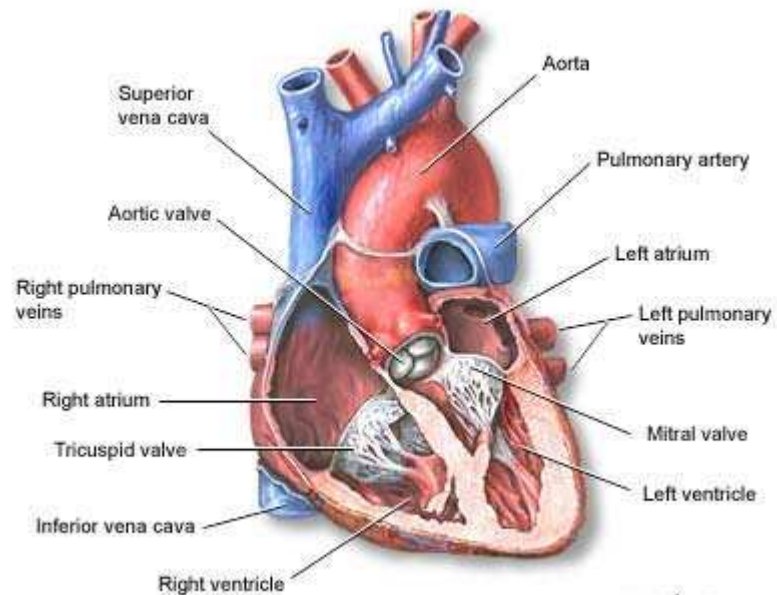
- Dilated cardiomyopathy is a condition in which the heart becomes weak and large. It cannot pump blood well enough. Many different medical problems can cause this type of cardiomyopathy.
- Hypertrophic cardiomyopathy (HCM) is a condition in which the heart muscle becomes thick. This thickening makes it harder for blood to leave the heart. This type of cardiomyopathy is usually passed down through families.
- Ischemic cardiomyopathy is caused by narrowing of the arteries that supply the heart with blood.
- Restrictive cardiomyopathy is a group of disorders in which the heart chambers are unable to properly fill with blood because the heart muscle is stiff.
- Peripartum cardiomyopathy occurs during pregnancy or in the first 5 months afterward.

Common causes of cardiomyopathy are:

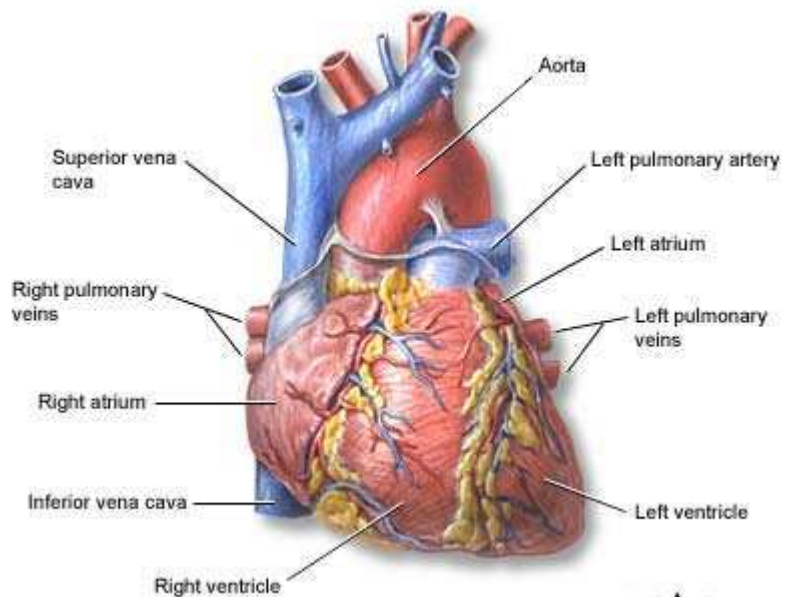
- Alcoholism and cocaine use
- Amyloidosis
- Chemotherapy drugs
- Coronary artery disease (ischemic cardiomyopathy) -- most common cause
- End-stage kidney disease
- Genetic defects
- High blood pressure (hypertension)
- Infections due to viruses -- HIV, Lyme disease, Chagas disease
- Nutritional deficiencies (such as selenium, thiamine, and calcium)
- Pregnancy
- Systemic lupus erythematosus

For more information on the different types of cardiomyopathy, see also:

- Dilated cardiomyopathy



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- Hypertrophic cardiomyopathy
- Restrictive cardiomyopathy
- Ischemic cardiomyopathy
- Peripartum cardiomyopathy

Treatment

The conditions that cause dilated cardiomyopathy are treated. Heart failure is treated by:

- Taking medicines
- Making important changes in your lifestyle (dieting, exercising, stopping smoking, stopping alcohol use or using it only in moderation, and stopping the use of other substances such as illegal drugs)
- Knowing your body and the symptoms of heart failure
- Wearing a pacemaker to treat a slow heart rate or to help both sides of your heart beat at the same time
- Wearing a defibrillator that sends an electrical pulse to stop life-threatening, abnormal heart rhythms

See also: Heart failure

A cardiac catheterization may be done to see if you need coronary artery bypass (CABG) surgery or a balloon procedure (angioplasty), which can improve blood flow to the damaged or weakened heart muscle. It may also be done to measure pressures and check your heart function (called right-heart catheterization).

If you have tried all of the standard treatments and still have very severe symptoms, you may need a heart transplant. Recently, implantable artificial heart pumps have been developed. However, very few patients are able to have this advanced treatment.

Outlook (Prognosis)

The outlook depends on many different things, including:

- Cause and type of cardiomyopathy
- How well you respond to treatment
- How severe the heart problem is

Often, you can control heart failure with medicine, lifestyle changes, and by treating the condition that caused it.

Heart failure may suddenly become worse due to:

- Angina
- Eating high-salt foods
- Heart attack
- Infections or other illnesses
- Not taking your medicine correctly

Heart failure is usually a long-term (chronic) illness. It may get worse over time. Some people develop severe heart failure that medicines, surgery, and other treatments can no longer help.

Patients with certain types of cardiomyopathy and heart failure are at risk for dangerous heart rhythm problems.

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