

# Cardiomyopathy

## WHAT IS IT?

Cardiomyopathy refers to diseases of the heart muscle. These diseases have a variety of causes, symptoms, and treatments. In cardiomyopathy, the heart muscle becomes enlarged or abnormally thick or rigid. In rare cases, the muscle tissue in the heart is replaced with scar tissue.

## Also Known As: Dilated Cardiomyopathy, Hypotrophic Cardiomyopathy, Restrictive Cardiomyopathy

## BASIC FACTS

- Cardiomyopathy refers to diseases of the heart muscle. It has a variety of causes, symptoms, and treatments.
- In cardiomyopathy, the heart muscle becomes enlarged or abnormally thick or rigid. In rare cases, the muscle tissue in the heart is replaced with scar tissue.
- The four major types of cardiomyopathy are dilated, hypertrophic, and restrictive cardiomyopathy and arrhythmogenic right ventricular dysplasia.
- Some types of cardiomyopathy are caused by a gene mutation and run in families. Other types are a result of another disease or condition, such as damage to the heart from a heart attack, high blood pressure, or a viral infection. In many cases, the cause is unknown.
- Cardiomyopathy can affect people of all ages, from babies to older adults. However, certain age groups are more likely to have certain types of cardiomyopathy.
- Signs and symptoms of cardiomyopathy can include:
  - Tiredness
  - Weakness
  - Shortness of breath after exercise or even at rest
  - Swelling of the abdomen, legs, ankles, and feet
  - Dizziness, lightheadedness, or fainting during exercise
  - Abnormal heart rhythms (arrhythmias) or an extra or unusual sound heard during the heartbeat (heart murmur)
- Cardiomyopathy is diagnosed using a medical history, physical exam, and tests such as chest x ray, electrocardiogram, echocardiogram, stress test, and blood tests.
- Because cardiomyopathy often runs in families, doctors may recommend that the parents, brothers and sisters, and children of people with cardiomyopathy be tested for the disease.
- Treatments depend on the type of cardiomyopathy, how severe the symptoms and complications are, and the age and overall health of the person.

- The main goals of treatment are to manage any conditions that cause or contribute to the cardiomyopathy, control symptoms, stop the disease from getting worse, and reduce complications and the chance of sudden cardiac death.
- Treatment may involve medicines, surgery, nonsurgical procedures, or lifestyle changes.
- Cardiomyopathy can sometimes be prevented by managing or preventing the underlying condition that causes the disease. Cardiomyopathy that runs in families cannot be prevented.
- Some people live long, healthy lives despite having cardiomyopathy. Some people don't even realize that they have the disease because they have no symptoms. In other people, the disease develops rapidly, symptoms are severe, and serious complications develop. Current treatments can do much to reduce symptoms and help people live healthy lives.