



CARDIOMYOPATHY: WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

Cardiomyopathy is a broad term for conditions that impact the heart muscle. People of all ages and races can develop cardiomyopathy. Like with many other heart conditions, women often don't get the same quality of care as men. Women with different forms of cardiomyopathy may be diagnosed later in the disease stage or have more severe symptoms upon diagnosis. As a woman with or at risk of heart disease, it's important to know as much as you can, so you can advocate for your best care!



WOMENHEART
THE NATIONAL COALITION FOR
WOMEN WITH HEART DISEASE



CARDIOMYOPATHY: WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

Cardiomyopathy may cause the heart muscle to become weaker, thicker, or stiffer than normal, making it more difficult for the heart to pump blood to the rest of the body.

It is estimated that about **1 in 500 adults have cardiomyopathy**, yet cardiomyopathy often goes undiagnosed.

There are different types of cardiomyopathies, and each type can have its own causes, symptoms, and treatments.

CAUSES

- Genetics — runs in families
- Infections or toxins
- Chronic conditions — high blood pressure, diabetes, obesity, coronary artery disease or damage caused by a heart attack
- Unknown causes — sometimes no cause is found

TYPES OF CARDIOMYOPATHIES

- **Peripartum cardiomyopathy:** Occurs during the last month of pregnancy or up to one year postpartum in which the heart muscle weakens
- **Dilated cardiomyopathy:** Heart chamber enlargement and reduced pumping ability
- **Nondilated left ventricular cardiomyopathy:** the heart chamber is still normal (not enlarged), but the heart doesn't function as well as it should
- **Hypertrophic cardiomyopathy:** Abnormal thickening of heart muscle, often genetic
- **Restrictive cardiomyopathy:** Stiffness of the heart muscle, restricting blood filling
- **Infiltrative cardiomyopathy:** Abnormal substances build up in the heart muscle, making it rigid and difficult for the heart to fill and pump blood properly
- **Arrhythmogenic cardiomyopathy:** Right side of the heart weakens and is replaced by scar or fatty tissue, causing rhythm problems
- **Stress-induced (takotsubo):** Also known as 'broken heart syndrome,' this condition mimics a heart attack, but often resolves on its own

SYMPTOMS

People with cardiomyopathy experience symptoms differently—and some people may not have symptoms until their condition has progressed.

- Shortness of breath or trouble breathing
- Chest pain
- Fatigue
- Swelling in the ankles and legs
- Irregular heartbeat or palpitations
- Syncope, the medical term for fainting or briefly passing out



If you notice severe shortness of breath, fainting, chest pain, or any worsening symptoms, seek care right away!

DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT OF CARDIOMYOPATHY

Cardiomyopathy is diagnosed through a clinical evaluation and thorough medical history, including lab tests, imaging of the heart and genetic testing. Once diagnosed, treatments may include:

-  Medications to control symptoms and prevent complications
-  A medical device, such as a pacemaker, resynchronization device or defibrillator
-  Surgery or heart transplant

Daily behaviors, such as low-to-moderate exercise, balanced eating, along with reducing sodium and alcohol may help support your treatment.

Keep an open dialogue with your medical team about follow-up care, treatment options, and how to keep your heart as healthy as possible!



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WOMENHEART: The National Coalition for Women with Heart Disease is the nation's first and still only patient centered organization exclusively focused on serving millions of American women living with or at risk for heart disease — the leading cause of death in women. WomenHeart is solely devoted to advancing women's heart health through advocacy, community education, and the nation's only patient support network for women living with heart disease. WomenHeart is both a coalition and a community of thousands of members nationwide, including women heart patients and their families, physicians, and health advocates, all committed to helping women live longer, healthier lives. To learn more or to donate visit womenheart.org.

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