Brief Report
Volume 10:1, 2021

Journal of
Hypertension: Open Access

ISSN: 2167-1095 Open Access

Cardiomyopathy

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Cardiomyopathy is a progressive disease of the myocardium, or heart muscle. In most cases, the heart muscle weakens and is unable to pump blood to the rest of the body as well as it should. There are many different types of cardiomyopathy caused by a range of factors, from coronary heart disease to certain drugs. These can all lead to an irregular heartbeat, heart failure, a heart valve problem, or other complications. There are two main types of cardiomyopathy:

Primary cardiomyopathy – The patient does not have other cardiac conditions that lead to weakened heart muscle. In some cases, cardiomyopathies are inherited and may be passed down to other family members.

Secondary cardiomyopathy – Caused by a medical condition (such as hypertension, valve disease, congenital heart disease, coronary artery disease, or toxins/medications). Some of these conditions can be treated, which can prevent the muscle affected. The goal of therapy for patients with secondary cardiomyopathy is to identify and correct the medical condition(s) that are responsible for the condition.

Other Types

Peripartum cardiomyopathy occurs during or after pregnancy. This rare type occurs when the heart weakens within five months of delivery or within the final month of pregnancy. When it occurs after delivery, it's sometimes called postpartum cardiomyopathy. This is a form of dilated cardiomyopathy, and it's a life-threatening condition. There's no cause. Alcoholic cardiomyopathy is due to drinking too much alcohol over a long period of time, which can weaken your heart so it can no longer pump blood efficiently. Your heart then becomes enlarged. This is a form of dilated cardiomyopathy. Ischemic cardiomyopathy occurs when your heart can no longer pump blood to the rest of your body due to coronary artery disease. Blood vessels to the heart muscle narrow and become blocked. This deprives the heart muscle of oxygen. Ischemic cardiomyopathy is a common cause of heart failure. Alternatively, nonischemic cardiomyopathy is any form that isn't related to coronary artery disease. Non-ischemic cardiomyopathy. These forms of cardiomyopathy are not related to known coronary artery disease. They are sometimes inherited. There are four types of non-ischemic cardiomyopathy:

Dilated Cardiomyopathy The most common form, dilated cardiomyopathy (DCM), occurs when your heart muscle is too weak to pump blood efficiently. The muscles stretch and become thinner. This allows the chambers of your heart to expand. Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy is believed to be genetic. It occurs when your heart walls thicken and prevent blood from flowing through your heart. It's a fairly common type of cardiomyopathy. It can also be caused by long-term high blood pressure or aging. Diabetes or thyroid disease can also cause hypertrophic cardiomyopathy. There are other instances that the cause is unknown. Restrictive Cardiomyopathy is the least common form. It occurs when the ventricles stiffen and can't relax enough to fill up with blood. Scarring of the heart, which frequently occurs after a heart transplant, may be a cause. It can also occur as a result of heart disease. Arrhythmogenic Right Ventricular Dysplasia (ARVD) is a very rare form of cardiomyopathy, but it's the leading cause of sudden death in young athletes. In this type of genetic cardiomyopathy, fat and extra fibrous tissue replace the muscle of the right ventricle. This causes abnormal heart rhythms.

Symptoms

There might be no signs or symptoms in the early stages of cardiomyopathy. But as the condition advances, signs and symptoms usually appear, including:

Breathlessness with exertion or even at rest
Swelling of the legs, ankles and feet
Bloating of the abdomen due to fluid buildup
Cough while lying down
Fatigue
Heartbeats that feel rapid, pounding or fluttering
Chest discomfort or pressure
Dizziness, lightheadedness and fainting

Signs and symptoms tend to get worse unless treated. In some people, the condition worsens quickly; in others, it might not worsen for a long time.

Noncompaction cardiomyopathy, also called spongiform cardiomyopathy, is a rare disease present at birth. It results from abnormal development of the heart muscle in the womb. Diagnosis may occur at any stage of life.