

Cardiomyopathy

Cardiomyopathy (literally “heart muscle disease”) is the measurable deterioration for any reason of the ability of the myocardium (the heart muscle) to contract, usually leading to heart failure.

Common symptoms include dyspnea (breathlessness) and peripheral edema (swelling of the legs). Those with cardiomyopathy are often at risk of dangerous forms of irregular heart rate and sudden cardiac death.

The most common form of cardiomyopathy is dilated cardiomyopathy.

Although the term “cardiomyopathy” could theoretically apply to almost any disease affecting the heart, it is usually reserved for “severe myocardial disease leading to heart failure”.

Cardiomyopathy and myocarditis resulted in 443,000 deaths in 2013, up from 294,000 in 1990.

see [Takotsubo cardiomyopathy](#).

Prevention

Preventing **cardiomyopathy**—a disease of the heart muscle that can lead to heart failure—depends on its **underlying cause**. There are several types (e.g., **dilated, hypertrophic, restrictive, arrhythmogenic**, etc.), but general **prevention strategies** focus on reducing risk factors that can damage the heart over time.

Here’s a general overview of **cardiomyopathy prevention**:

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□ **1. Manage Risk Factors - High blood pressure:** Control it with diet, exercise, and/or medication. - **Diabetes:** Maintain blood sugar within target ranges. - **Obesity:** Keep a healthy weight through balanced eating and physical activity. - **Sleep apnea:** Get evaluated if you snore or feel excessively tired during the day.

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□ **2. Avoid Toxins and Substances - Alcohol:** Limit or avoid excessive intake—especially important for alcoholic cardiomyopathy. - **Cocaine and other drugs:** Strongly linked to heart muscle damage. - **Certain chemotherapy drugs:** If undergoing cancer treatment, ask about heart-protective strategies.

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□ **3. Genetic Counseling (if at risk)** - If you have a **family history** of hypertrophic or dilated cardiomyopathy, consider genetic screening and early monitoring.

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□ **4. Live a Heart-Healthy Lifestyle - Exercise regularly** (at least 150 minutes of moderate

activity per week). - **Eat a heart-healthy diet:** Emphasize fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and healthy fats (like olive oil). - **Reduce salt intake** to avoid fluid retention and high blood pressure. - **Stay hydrated** and avoid dehydration, especially in hot weather or illness.

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♥ **5. Regular Medical Checkups** - Routine **echocardiograms, ECGs**, or other tests may help detect early changes in those at risk. - Early treatment of viral infections affecting the heart (e.g., myocarditis) can help prevent post-infectious cardiomyopathy.

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☐ **6. Be Cautious with Over-the-Counter Supplements** - Some herbal products may harm the heart or interact with medications. Always consult your doctor.

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