

# HCM Quick Reference Tool

Getting a diagnosis of HCM can be overwhelming. This guide explains some common words and phrases you may hear during your HCM journey. It can help you have deeper conversations with your cardiologist and other important people in your life.

What is HCM?

**HCM** is short for

**hypertrophic cardiomyopathy**

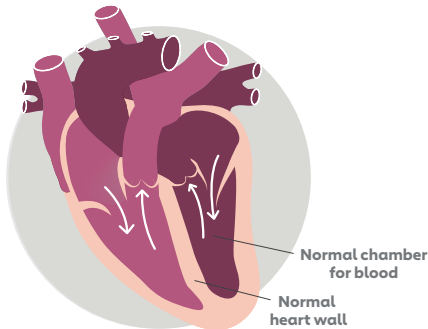
(hī-pər-'trō-fik 'kār-dē-ō-(-),mī-'ä-pə-thē)

## Hypertrophic cardiomyopathy:

A condition that causes muscles in the heart walls to thicken and stiffen. This makes the heart not work as well as it should.

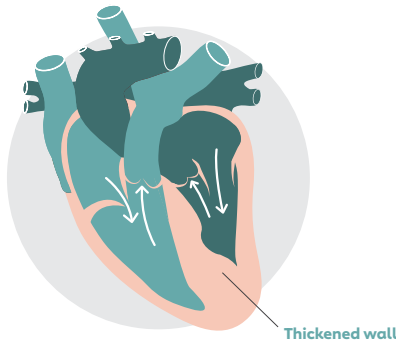
- **Hypertrophic** means extra growth or thickening of an organ
- **Cardiomyopathy** means a disease of the heart muscle

Normal Heart



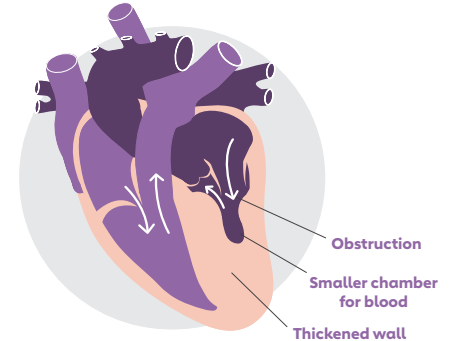
- In **a heart without HCM**, the heart wall is normal sized and does not affect blood flow

Nonobstructive HCM Heart



- In **nonobstructive HCM**, the heart muscle is thickened but does not block blood flow

Obstructive HCM Heart



- In **obstructive HCM**, the heart muscle is thickened and partially blocks blood flowing from the heart

## Common tests in HCM:



**Cardiac magnetic resonance imaging (CMR):** A test that uses magnetic and radio waves to create detailed pictures of your heart.



**Echocardiogram (ECHO):** This is the main test to diagnose HCM. An ECHO uses sound waves to create pictures of your heart, including the heart walls and valves, and see how blood flows through the heart. A **stress echocardiogram** shows how your heart is working when you are exercising.



**Cardiopulmonary exercise testing (CPET):** This test measures the maximum amount of activity your heart and lungs can perform before you get tired while doing an exercise challenge. This is also called your **exercise tolerance**.



**Electrocardiogram (ECG or EKG):** A test that records the electrical activity in your heart.

Learn about additional common terms associated with HCM on the next page.

**HCM Beyond**  
the Heart

## The Language of HCM

### Common HCM symptoms and other terms:



**Arrhythmia:** An irregular rhythm that can cause the heart to beat faster or slower than normal.



**Ventricular tachycardia:** A common type of arrhythmia that happens when heartbeats occur very rapidly.



**AFib (atrial fibrillation):** A type of arrhythmia with an irregular, often fast, heartbeat. It might feel like your heart is skipping a beat, fluttering, or you may not feel anything at all.



**Dyspnea:** Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath.



**Edema:** Swelling, typically of the hands and feet.



**Exercise tolerance:** How hard your heart and lungs can work as you exercise.



**Heart murmur:** Sounds made by abnormal blood flow through the heart.



**Palpitations:** Feelings of a fast heartbeat, fluttering heartbeat, or pounding heartbeat.



**pVO<sub>2</sub> (peak oxygen consumption):** A measure of exercise tolerance. It is the greatest amount of oxygen your body consumes during intense exercise. People with HCM may have lower pVO<sub>2</sub>, which can make daily activities difficult.



**Gradient:** Refers to left ventricular outflow tract gradient (LVOT-G), a measure of the amount of obstruction in the heart that limits blood flow to the body.



**Ejection fraction:** A measurement of how much blood pumps out with each heartbeat. A lower percentage means the heart isn't pumping as effectively.

### Common treatments for HCM:

- **Beta blockers\*:** Medicines that cause the heart to beat more slowly and with less force
- **Calcium channel blockers\*:** Medicines that allow the blood vessels to relax and open. Some calcium channel blockers also slow the heart rate
- **Disopyramide\*:** Medicine that causes the heart to beat with less force
- **Cardiac myosin inhibitor (CMI):** Medicine that is specifically designed for people with HCM to make the heart beat with less force
- **Septal reduction therapy (SRT):** An invasive or surgical procedure that may be used in obstructive HCM to help relieve symptoms or obstruction in the heart

\*These medicines are not approved by the US Food and Drug Administration to treat HCM.

Use this tool to aid conversations with others about your condition. Always talk to your cardiologist about any symptoms you experience or questions you may have.

Visit [HCMBeyondtheHeart.com](https://HCMBeyondtheHeart.com) to learn more about how we're supporting people with HCM so they can live full, healthy lives.