

# Understanding Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy (HCM)

## What is Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy?



Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy, often abbreviated as HCM, is a condition where the heart muscle becomes abnormally thick. This thickness can make it harder for the heart to pump blood. HCM is often inherited, meaning it's passed down through families.

## Signs and Symptoms of HCM:

1. **Shortness of Breath:** Especially during exercise or exertion, due to the heart struggling to pump efficiently.
2. **Chest Pain:** Often experienced during physical activity, possibly due to restricted blood flow to the heart.
3. **Palpitations:** Feeling of rapid, fluttering, or pounding heartbeats.
4. **Fatigue:** Feeling unusually tired, a sign the body isn't receiving enough oxygen-rich blood.
5. **Dizziness or Lightheadedness:** May occur if the brain isn't receiving enough blood.
6. **Fainting (Syncope):** Sometimes happens due to reduced blood flow to the brain.
7. **Swelling in the Ankles, Feet, or Legs:** Indicative of fluid retention, a common symptom of heart failure.

## How Does HCM Relate to Heart Failure?

HCM can affect the heart's efficiency and its ability to pump blood. Over time, this can lead to heart failure, a condition where the heart can't pump enough blood to meet the body's needs. Symptoms like those listed above may occur because the heart isn't pumping effectively.

## Living Well with Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy

- 1 **Regular Check-ups:** Regular visits to your cardiologist are important. They can monitor your condition, adjust treatments, and provide guidance.
- 2 **Medications:** Medications can help manage symptoms and reduce the risk of complications. It's crucial to take them as prescribed and discuss any side effects with your doctor.
- 3 **Lifestyle Adjustments:**
  - ✓ **Diet:** Eating a balanced diet low in sodium and saturated fats can help manage blood pressure and cholesterol, reducing the strain on your heart.
  - ✓ **Exercise:** While strenuous activity may be restricted, many people with HCM can enjoy moderate, supervised exercise. Always consult with your healthcare provider before starting any new exercise regimen.
  - ✓ **Limit Alcohol & Avoid Smoking:** Both can worsen the symptoms of HCM and contribute to heart failure.
- 4 **Know Your Limits:** Pay attention to your body. If you feel overly tired, short of breath, or have chest pain, rest and consult your healthcare provider.
- 5 **Emotional Support:** Living with HCM can be challenging. Support from family, friends, or support groups can help you cope. Professional counseling may also be beneficial.
- 6 **Stay Informed:** Understanding your condition empowers you to make better health decisions. Don't hesitate to ask questions during your medical appointments.
- 7 **Genetic Counseling:** Since HCM is often inherited, genetic counseling can provide you and your family valuable insights into the risk of HCM and guidance on monitoring and treatment.

For more information on HCM and other support please on Academy at [heartlife.ca/academy/](http://heartlife.ca/academy/)





**It's  
About  
Life  
Not Failure**

HeartLife Foundation is a patient-driven charity whose mission is to transform the quality of life for people living with heart failure by **Engaging, Educating, and Empowering** a global community to create lasting solutions and build healthier lives.

## HeartLife Foundation

HeartLife Foundation is Canada's first – and only – national patient-led Heart Failure organization. We are a Federal Charity aimed at raising public awareness of Heart Failure, engaging patients, families, and caregivers to provide education and support, facilitate access to the latest research, innovations, and treatments, and advocate better care for all.

We aim to collaborate with partners in healthcare, government, and industry to:

- Establish a strong, critical voice for heart failure patients in Canada;
- Raise public awareness of heart failure and advocate for better care;
- Collaborate with stakeholders to ensure patient access to the latest innovative research and therapies; Mentor, support, and guide patients, families, and caregivers in times of need;
- Educate and empower patients to effectively self-manage their illness;
- Build a membership of local, regional, and national heart failure advocates.

## Mission

The HeartLife Foundation is a patient-driven charity whose mission is to transform the quality of life for people living with heart failure by engaging, educating, and empowering a global community to create lasting solutions and build healthier lives.



[www.heartlife.ca](http://www.heartlife.ca)

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