

# Signs and symptoms

Cardiomyopathy<sup>UK</sup>  
the heart muscle charity

## What is cardiomyopathy?

Cardiomyopathy is a disease of the heart muscle: 'cardio' means heart, 'myo' means muscle and 'pathy' means disease.

It isn't a single condition but a group of conditions that affect the structure of the heart and reduce its ability to pump blood around the body. The heart muscle could be weaker, too thick, too stiff or could lose its rhythm.

Cardiomyopathy is the main cause of sudden cardiac death in under 35-year-olds.

## Who is affected by cardiomyopathy?

Cardiomyopathy can affect anyone at any age. Around 1 in 250 people in the UK are affected by the condition. Cardiomyopathy can be genetic and run in families so it's important to know of any family history of heart disease or sudden, unexplained death.

## Treatment

Although there is no cure, there are effective treatments to manage the condition. Most symptoms of cardiomyopathy can be controlled through medication, devices such as pacemakers or ICDs, surgery, or in some cases a heart transplant.

## We're here to help

If you're concerned about symptoms, call our free helpline, email us or use our livechat on our website to speak to a specialist cardiac support nurse.



0800 018 1024  
Mon-Fri 8:30 - 4:30pm



supportnurse@cardiomyopathy.org



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## Do you have any of the following symptoms?

If you have any of these symptoms, talk to your doctor. If you have a history of heart disease in your family, make sure your doctor knows.

### Breathlessness

Fluid builds up on the lungs, making it harder to breathe.



### Tiredness

If the heart's function is reduced, less energy is delivered to the tissues, which can cause fatigue or tiredness.



### Swollen ankles and/or tummy

If the heart can't pump effectively, fluid can build up in the tissues. This causes swelling (also known as oedema).



### Palpitations

(feeling your heart beating) can be caused by abnormal heart rhythms. These are known as arrhythmias.



### Dizziness or fainting

when your heart isn't working effectively, your oxygen levels are reduced, causing light-headedness, dizziness and, in some cases, fainting.



### Chest pain

chest pain can be caused by reduced blood flow from the heart

