



ABOUT THE DISEASE

Hypertrophic cardiomyopathy (HCM) is a heart disease where the heart muscle becomes excessively thickened. This thickening limits the heart's ability to fill and pump blood effectively.

HCM is the most common heart disease of cats and virtually never affects dogs. There are often mild symptoms, or no symptoms at all, until more advanced stages of the disease.

HCM can cause congestive heart failure. Please see the [Congestive Heart Failure](#) document for additional information.

Blood clot (thromboemboli) formation is a common occurrence with **HCM**. These clots can travel and block off blood flow to organs and tissues. Please see the [Saddle Thrombus](#) document for additional information.

OBTAINING A DIAGNOSIS

X-rays (radiographs) can sometimes detect heart enlargement, but is often unreliable.

ECG (electrocardiography) can sometimes support a **HCM** diagnosis, but is also often unreliable.

An enzymatic test (proBNP) will help confirm the presence of heart disease, but will not necessarily determine severity.

An ultrasound of the heart (echocardiogram) is preferred for a confirmatory diagnosis and assessment of severity.

Complete blood work and urine testing will provide overall health to help determine which medications will be appropriate.

TREATMENT

Unfortunately, there is no cure for **HCM**, which means the goal is to manage the clinical symptoms and reduce secondary side effects of the disease.

Feline patients without symptoms require no treatment.

Feline patients with symptoms can be treated with medications that help control or eliminate those symptoms.

In addition to the medication outlined in the [Congestive Heart Failure](#) document, **HCM** patients may also receive:

- **Calcium Channel Blockers** – (amlodipine) reduce blood pressure, relax heart muscle, and alter heart rate
- **Beta (β) Blockers** – (atenolol, esmolol, or sotalol) reduce blood pressure and help with abnormal/irregular heart rhythm (arrhythmias)
- **Diuretics** – (furosemide/spironolactone) utilize the kidneys to get rid of excess water into the urine to remove retained fluid out of the lungs. Many patients drink and urinate more often while taking a diuretic.

In more advanced and life threatening stages of **HCM**, feline patients often require hospitalization, aggressive diuretic therapy, oxygen therapy, and even mild sedation in some cases to reduce stress on the heart.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

- Avoid stressful situations that can strain the heart excessively and cause the return of symptoms.
- Limit stimulated physical activity.
 - Spontaneous feline behavior is difficult to predict and control, but feathers, fetch/chase play, and the addition of new felines to the household should be avoided.
- Watch for changes in mood, hiding behavior, and increased breathing rate and effort.
- Watch for other general illness like vomiting, diarrhea, and changes in appetite.