

Hypertrophic Obstructive Cardiomyopathy

Your heart is a muscle. With every beat, it pumps blood through its 4 chambers—the upper atria and lower ventricles—and out to the rest of your body.

When you have hypertrophic obstructive cardiomyopathy, or HOCM, your heart must work harder to do its job.

Parts of the heart including the septum, the wall between the right and left sides of the heart, have grown thick and now impede blood flow out to the body.

This heart disease may cause symptoms. But not always.

Symptoms of HOCM may include: shortness of breath; chest pain; fatigue; irregular heartbeat; dizziness or lightheadedness; fainting; and swelling in the legs, feet, or belly.

These symptoms may get worse with physical activity.

To ease symptoms, your healthcare provider may advise lifestyle changes and certain medicines. These can help your heart work better.

“The medicines that we start out with, are medicines that slow the heart rate down. In doing so, they allow the blood to pump more easily. So it goes from the heart to the rest of the body without getting blocked.”

But if they don't help, your provider may recommend septal myectomy.

This surgery reduces the thickness of the septum. Extra muscle is removed, improving blood flow out of your heart.

“The surgery itself is shaving the portion of the muscle that is enlarged, but it's not about necessarily shaving the most amount of muscle out. So how much muscle you get out doesn't matter as much as where the muscle is removed because it's a dynamic obstruction to blood flow.”

Having a septal myectomy can help you feel better and get you active again. It may also help you live longer.

Talk with your healthcare provider to see if it may be an option for you.