
Frequently Asked Questions

Q. What is Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy?

Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy (HCM) is a condition that causes the heart muscle to become thickened, making it harder for the heart to pump blood effectively. This may prevent the heart from getting enough blood and oxygen during exercise which could trigger a cardiac arrest and death.

Q. What is the cause of Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy?

The actual cause of HCM is not known, however it is commonly an inherited condition that results in genetic defects that control growth of the heart muscle.

Q. How common is Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy?

HCM is a relatively uncommon disorder and is estimated to affect 1 in 500 people.

Q. What are common symptoms of Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy?

Not everyone with HCM will demonstrate signs or symptoms of the disorder. However, symptoms associated with HCM include chest pain, dizziness, fainting, heart failure, hypertension (high blood pressure), lightheadedness, skipping or racing heart, shortness of breath (with activity or when lying down), and fatigue.

Q. How can Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy be detected?

Initial signs of HCM can be detected through an electrocardiogram (ECG). In those with an ECG suggestive of HCM, the diagnosis can be made utilizing an echocardiogram, or ultrasound of the heart.

Q. How does the Heart Healthy Teen Screen differ from a pre-participation sports physical?

Pre-participation sports physicals differ in intensity and scope. The Heart Healthy Teen Screen offers a more comprehensive focus on the heart, looking for signs of HCM, or other potentially dangerous heart ailments that may raise a student's risk of sudden cardiac arrest. Combined with a Health History Questionnaire focused on the family and individual's heart history, the Heart Healthy Teen Screen uses an electrocardiogram (ECG) and sometimes an Echocardiogram (echo) to more intently focus on heart abnormalities.

Q. What is an electrocardiogram (ECG)?

An ECG is a painless test that evaluates the electrical activity of the heart. It is a short test, taking only minutes to perform. Tracings of the electrical activity of the heart are obtained by having trained personnel attach electrodes to the chest, which are connected to the ECG machine via lead wires. These wires help transmit the electrical activity back to the ECG machine and transform the electrical impulses into waveforms. These waveforms can then be evaluated for abnormalities by the physician.

Q. What is an echocardiogram?

The echocardiogram (echo) is an ultrasound of the heart. The echo utilizes sound waves to produce a picture of the heart. This picture can then be used to determine valve structure, heart wall thickness and the pumping ability of the heart.

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Q. What happens if the screening results for my child come back abnormal?

A report of the screening results will be sent home to the student's parents or guardian for you to share with your family physician. If an abnormality is found that results in a "Stop" activity recommendation, the parents will be notified and consulted immediately by the physician.

Q. How much does the Heart Healthy Teen Screen cost?

Heart Healthy Teen Screens are provided free of charge as a community service offering. This includes a full report of the screening, a review by a physician and an ECG. A quick look echo will also be provided, if clinically indicated.

Q. How can such valuable tests be offered at no charge?

This program can be provided at no cost to the students due to the volunteer efforts of the physicians and staff. Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare has provided the use of equipment and supplies needed for the screening.