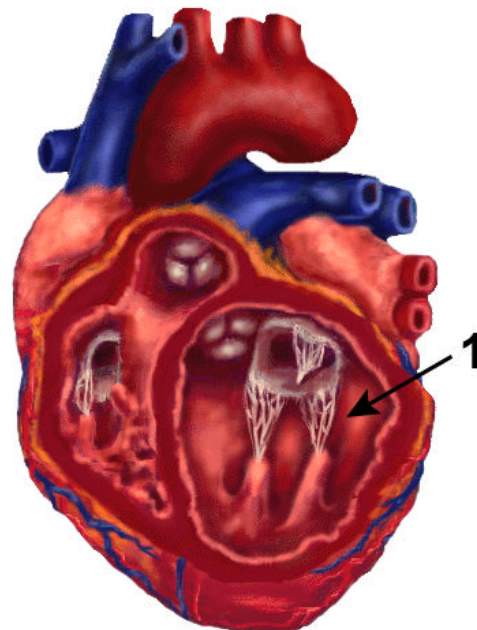
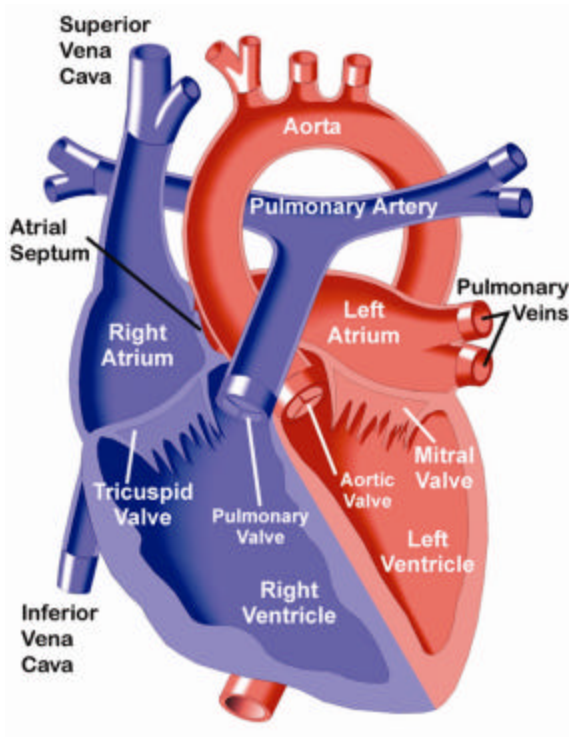
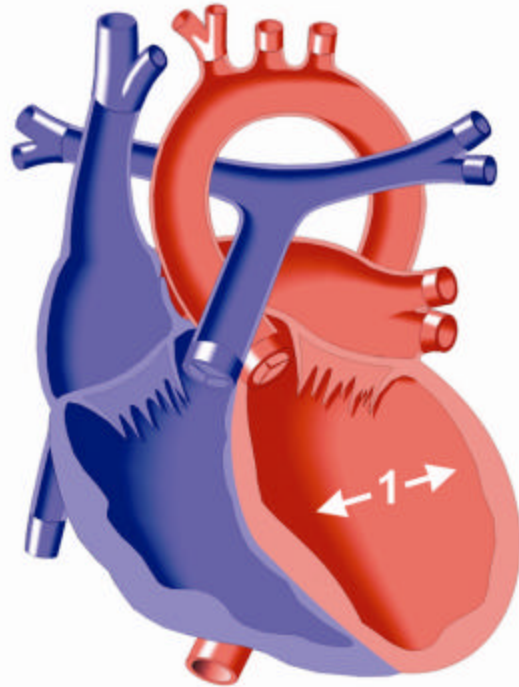


# Dilated Cardiomyopathy

In this defect, the muscle wall of the left ventricle (the heart's main pumping chamber) is weaker than normal. As a result, the left ventricle may become enlarged (dilated) and the ability of the heart muscle to contract is impaired. There is also slight enlargement of the other heart chambers.

The cause of Dilated Cardiomyopathy (also known as Congestive Cardiomyopathy) is not known, though it sometimes results from a viral infection and is sometimes inherited.

The effects of Dilated Cardiomyopathy vary in seriousness depending on the degree of heart muscle weakness and dilatation. Fatigue, weakness, and shortness of breath are commonly experienced with physical exertion. There may also be difficulty breathing while lying down (orthopnea). There is a characteristic heart murmur and water retention (edema) of the legs is a frequently associated symptom. In some cases, there can be an improvement in the heart's performance over time.



**Above:**  
1. Dilated left ventricle.

**Left:** Normal Heart