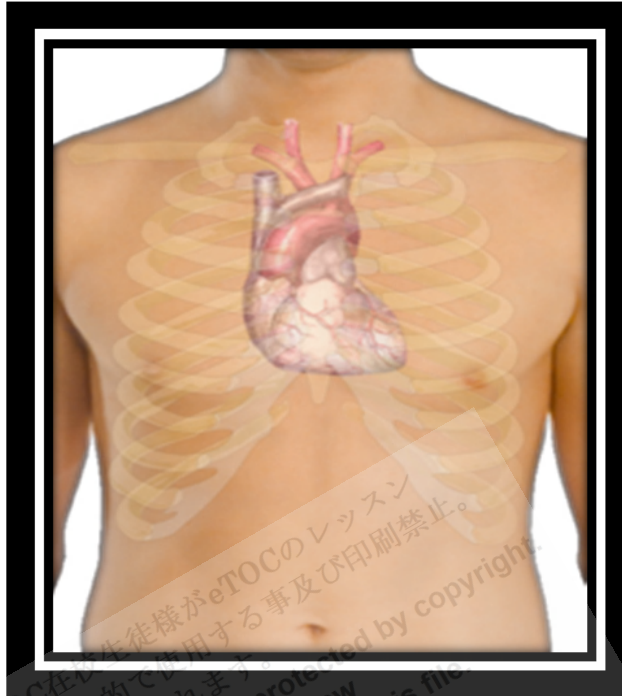


Approach to the Cardiac Patient



http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/6/6b/Surface_anatomy_of_the_heart.png/200px-Surface_anatomy_of_the_heart.png

Introduction

Symptoms or the physical examination may suggest a cardiovascular disorder. For confirmation, selected **noninvasive** and **invasive** tests are usually done.

History

A thorough history is fundamental; it cannot be replaced by testing. The history must include a thorough systems review because many symptoms apparently occurring in other systems (eg, **dyspnea**, **indigestion**) are often caused by **cardiac disease**. A family history is taken because many cardiac disorders (eg, **coronary artery disease**, **systemic hypertension**, bicuspid aortic valve, hypertrophic cardiomyopathy, **mitral valve prolapse**) have a **heritable basis**.

Serious cardiac symptoms include chest pain or discomfort, dyspnea, weakness, fatigue, **palpitations**, **light-headedness**, sense of an **impending faint**, **syncope**, and **edema**.

These symptoms commonly occur in more than one cardiac disorder and in non-cardiac disorders.

Reference: <http://www.merckmanuals.com>