

**Office of Integrated Health
Health & Safety Information**

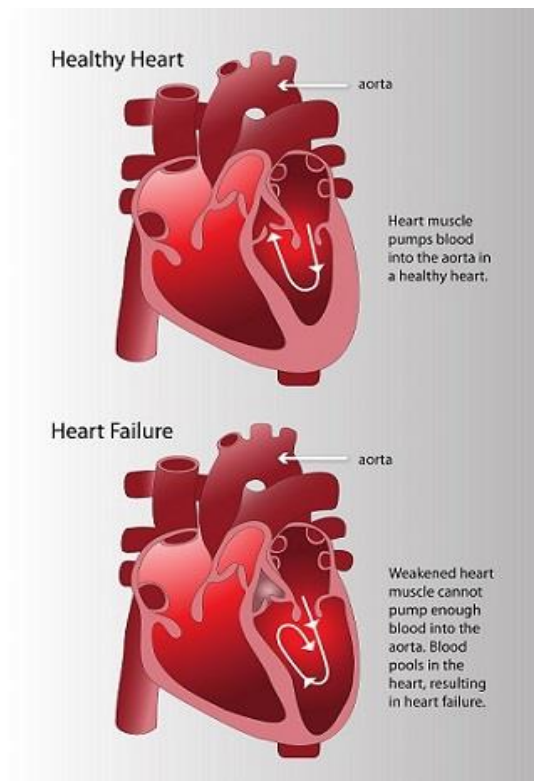
Dr. Dawn M. Adams DNP, ANP-BC, CHC
Director, Office of Integrated Health

Congestive Heart Failure

What is Congestive Heart Failure?

Heart failure is a condition in which the heart cannot pump enough blood to meet the body's needs. In some cases, the heart cannot fill with enough blood. In other cases, the heart cannot pump blood to the rest of the body with enough force. Some people have both problems. The term "heart failure" doesn't mean that your heart has stopped or is about to stop working. However, heart failure is a serious condition that requires medical care. Heart failure develops over time as the heart's pumping action grows weaker. The condition can affect the right side of the heart only, or it can affect both sides of the heart.

Right-sided heart failure occurs if the heart cannot pump enough blood to the lungs to pick up oxygen. Left-sided heart failure occurs if the heart can't pump enough oxygen-rich blood to the rest of the body. Right-sided heart failure may cause fluid to build up in the feet, ankles, legs, liver, abdomen, and the veins in the neck, this fluid is called edema. Right-side and left-side heart failure also may cause shortness of breath and fatigue or tiredness.



https://www.cdc.gov/dhdsp/data_statistics/fact_sheets/fs_heart_failure.htm

Signs and Symptoms of Congestive Heart Failure

The most common signs and symptoms of heart failure are: shortness of breath or trouble breathing and swelling in the ankles, feet, legs, and stomach or abdomen. All of these symptoms are the result of fluid buildup in your body. When symptoms start, individuals may feel tired and short of breath after routine physical effort, like climbing stairs or taking a bath. As the heart grows weaker, symptoms get worse. Some individuals may experience shortness of breath while lying flat.

Fluid buildup from heart failure also causes weight gain, frequent urination, and a cough that is worse at night and when lying down. This cough may be a sign of acute pulmonary edema. This is a condition in which too much fluid builds up in the lungs.

Pulmonary edema is a condition that requires emergency treatment.

Congestive Heart Failure Diagnosis and Treatment

The medical team will diagnose heart failure based on an individual's symptoms, medical and family histories, a physical exam, and test results. No single test can diagnose heart failure. If an individual has signs and symptoms of heart failure, the doctor may recommend one or more tests. The doctor may refer you to a cardiologist. A cardiologist is a doctor who specializes in diagnosing and treating heart diseases and conditions.

Prevention of Congestive Heart Failure

Most people who develop heart failure have (or had) another heart condition first. The most common conditions that can lead to heart failure are coronary artery disease, high blood pressure and previous heart attack. If an individual has been diagnosed with one of these conditions, it's critical that providers manage it carefully to help prevent the onset of heart failure.

Recommendations

Treatment can relieve your symptoms and make daily activities easier. It also can reduce the chance that you'll have to go to the hospital. Individuals will likely be prescribed medications and will follow a treatment plan for the rest of their life. One medication that may be prescribed is medication in a class of drugs called diuretics. Diuretics are often referred to as "water pills". These types of medications help to reduce water retention and therefore help reduce the work load on the heart. Retaining water can be a sign of distress. By tracking an individual's weight, you may be able to catch early signs of water retention.

Medications adherence is very important for individuals with Congestive Heart failure.

Despite treatment, symptoms may get worse over time. Therefore it is important that you follow your treatment plan such as:

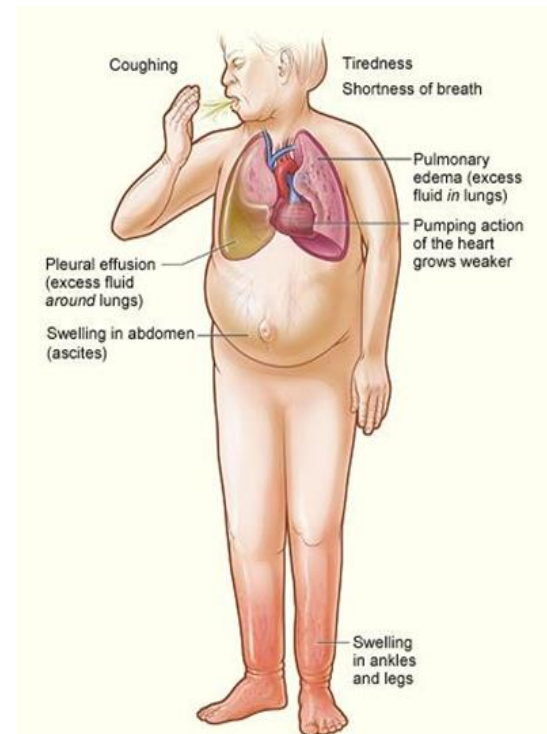
- Take your medicines as your doctor prescribes.
- Make all of the lifestyle changes that your doctor recommends.
- Keep all of your medical appointments, including visits to the doctor and appointments to get tests and lab work.
- Keep track of weight changes through daily weights; weigh individuals at the same time each day.

Resources

<https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health-topics/heart-failure>

https://www.cdc.gov/dhdsp/data_statistics/fact_sheets/fs_heart_failure.htm

http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/Conditions/HeartFailure/UnderstandYourRiskforHeartFailure/Understand-Your-Risk-for-Heart-Failure_UCM_002046_Article.jsp#.WonYSfmmHIU



<https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health-topics/heart-failure>