

LIVING WELL WITH HEART FAILURE

EDUCATION AND DISCHARGE INFORMATION



St. Joseph Health 
St. Jude Medical Center
A member of the St. Joseph Hoag Health alliance

HOW DOES YOUR HEART WORK?

Your heart is a muscular organ that pumps blood to your body. Blood carries the oxygen and nutrients that your organs need to work well. A healthy heart supplies your body with the right amount of blood at the rate needed to work well. If disease or injury weakens your heart, your body's organs won't receive enough blood to work normally.

WHAT IS CONGESTIVE HEART FAILURE?

Heart failure is a condition in which the heart can't pump enough blood to meet the body's needs. It develops over time as the heart muscle becomes too weak or too stiff.

Congestive heart failure (CHF) is a chronic progressive condition that affects the pumping power of your heart muscles. It is the term used to describe when fluid gets backed up into the lungs causing shortness of breath, chest pain, coughing, weakness and trouble sleeping.

WHAT CAUSES HEART FAILURE?

Heart Failure may result from other health conditions that directly affect your cardiovascular system. This is why it's important to get annual checkups to lower your risk for heart health problems, including high blood pressure (hypertension), coronary artery disease and valve conditions.

Hypertension

Hypertension (High blood pressure) is when your blood pressure, the force of your blood pushing against the walls of your blood vessels, is consistently too high. The force and friction of high blood pressure damages the delicate tissues inside the arteries. In turn, LDL (bad) cholesterol forms plaque along tiny tears in the artery walls, signifying the start of atherosclerosis (a slow, progressive disease where fatty deposits clog arteries). The more the plaque and damage increases, the narrower (smaller) the insides of the arteries become - raising blood pressure and starting a vicious circle that further harms your arteries, heart and the rest of your body.

Coronary Artery Disease

Cholesterol and other types of fatty substances can block the coronary arteries, which are the small arteries that supply blood to the heart. This causes the arteries to become narrow. Narrower coronary arteries restrict your blood flow and can lead to damage in your arteries and eventually your heart.

Heart Valve Conditions

Your heart valves regulate blood flow through your heart by opening and closing to let blood in and out of the chambers. Valves that don't open and close correctly may force your ventricles to work harder to pump blood. This can be a result of a heart infection or defect.

Other conditions

While heart-related diseases can lead to CHF, there are other seemingly unrelated conditions that may increase your risk, too. These include diabetes, thyroid disease, and obesity. Severe infections and allergic reactions may also contribute to CHF.

THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF HEART FAILURE?



Shortness of breath or trouble breathing



Dizziness or lightheadedness



Fatigue (tiredness)



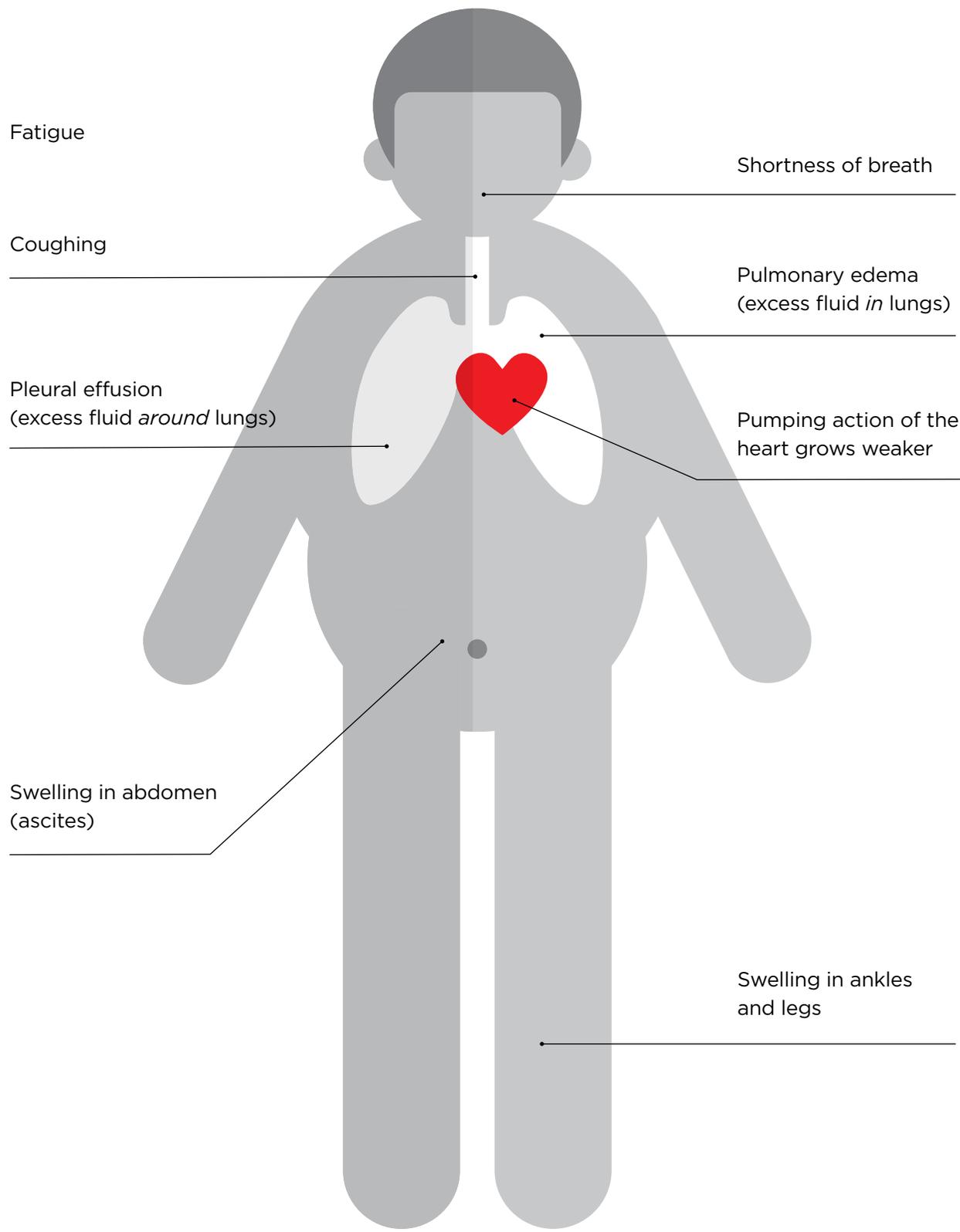
Sudden weight gain



Swelling in the ankles, feet, legs, abdomen, and veins in the neck

All of these symptoms are the result of fluid build-up in your body. Fluid build-up from heart failure also causes weight gain, frequent urination, and a cough that's worse at night and when you're lying down. Acute shortness of breath is a sign of pulmonary edema (e-DE-ma). This is a condition in which too much fluid builds up in your lungs. The condition requires emergency treatment.

HEART FAILURE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS



HOW IS HEART FAILURE DIAGNOSED?

Here are some tests your cardiologist may recommend:

An electrocardiogram (EKG) records your heart's rhythm. Abnormalities in your heart's rhythm, such as a rapid heartbeat or irregular rhythm, could suggest that the walls of your heart's chamber are thicker than normal. That could be a warning sign for a heart attack.

Blood tests can check for abnormal blood cells and infections. Blood tests can also check the level of BNP, a hormone that rises with heart failure.

A Chest x-ray takes pictures of the structures inside your chest, such as your heart, lungs, and blood vessels. This test can show whether your heart is enlarged, you have fluid in your lungs, or you have lung disease.

An Echocardiogram (2D Echo) uses sound waves to record heart's structure and motion. The test can determine if you already have poor blood flow, muscle damage, or a heart muscle that doesn't contract normally and valve problems.

HOW IS HEART FAILURE MANAGED AND TREATED?

Early diagnosis and treatment can help people who have heart failure live longer, more active lives. Treatment for heart failure depends on the type and severity of the heart failure.

The goals of treatment for all stages of heart failure include:



Treating the condition's underlying cause, such as coronary heart disease, hypertension or diabetes



Reducing symptoms



Stopping the heart failure from getting worse



Increasing your lifespan and improving your quality of life

HEART FAILURE MANAGEMENT

I. Heart-Healthy Lifestyle Changes

Take your weight every day

Your weight tells us very quickly if you have extra fluid in your body. Take your weight every morning after urinating. Wear the same amount of clothing each time you weigh yourself.

An early sign of fluid accumulation is an increase in body weight. This may occur even before shortness of breath or swelling in the legs and other body tissues (edema) is detected. **A weight gain of 3 pounds in one day or more than 5 pounds in one week** should prompt a call to the physician, who may order an increase in the dose of diuretics or other methods designed to stop the early stages of fluid accumulation before it becomes more severe.

Avoid drinking large amount of fluid. In severe case, your doctor may ask you to limit water intake to 2 liters daily

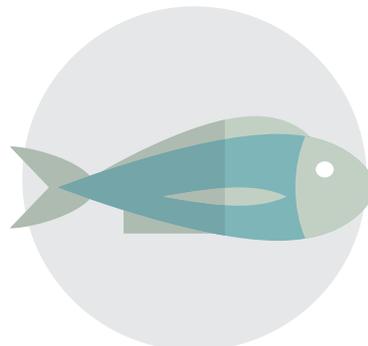
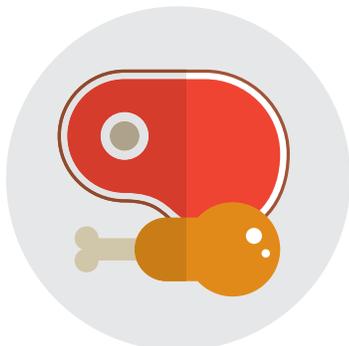


Manage your Diet

No added salt! Too much salt can cause you to hold on to fluid and increase your blood pressure.

DOs IN MY DIET

YES TO FRUITS, VEGETABLES GRAINS AND PROTEIN



DON'TS IN MY DIET

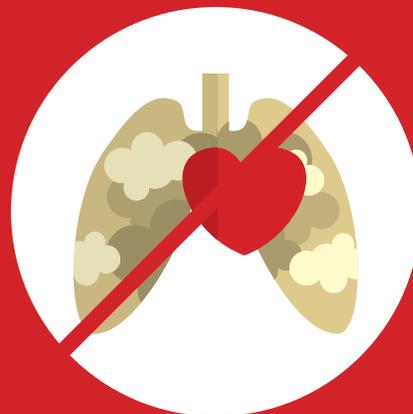
NO TO SALT SHAKER OR FOOD OOZING WITH SALT (eg. potato chips, fries, pretzels)

NO TO CANNED SOUP, PROCESSED MEATS, PICKLES AND OLIVES



DO NOT SMOKE

Smoking will worsen your condition and shorten your life. Let your doctor/nurse know if you smoke so we can give you resources on how to quit smoking.



ONE CIGARETTE TAKES 11 MINUTES OFF YOUR LIFE. NOT WORTH IT

Gradually increase your activity

Activity keeps your heart healthy. Discuss your activity plan with your doctor first. Then, start out slow and gradually increase your activity to 30 minutes a day. Stop if you get short of breath, dizzy, or develop chest pain.

Be careful!

Drink alcohol only in moderation if at all and stay away from illegal drugs. When taking prescription medications, follow instructions carefully and never increase your dose without doctor supervision.

Schedule regular doctor visits

You need a close monitoring for this condition. Ask when you should follow up with your doctor and make appointment as soon as you get home.

II. Take all your medications as prescribed

Your medications will keep your heart healthy. Call your doctor if you miss a medication or develop any side effects that prevent you from taking your medications.

IMPORTANT!

Take all medications regularly, don't change the amount of your medicine or skip a dose unless your doctor tells you to.



Taking more than one medicine raises the risk of side effects and other problems. Tell your doctor right away about any problems with your medicines.



Make sure your doctors and your pharmacist have a complete list of all of the medications and over-the-counter products that you're taking.



Talk with your doctor before taking any new medications prescribed by another doctor or any new over-the-counter medications or herbal supplements.

BEING SMART ABOUT YOUR MEDICATIONS

Angiotensin-converting enzyme inhibitors (ACE inhibitors)

Open up narrowed blood vessels to improve blood flow. They lower blood pressure and reduce strain on your heart. They also may reduce the risk of a future heart attack.

EXAMPLES:

Lisinopril, Benazepril, Enalapril, Captopril, Ramipril

POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS: May cause dizziness, drowsiness, headache, dry cough, swelling of the lips, tongue and throat

Angiotensin receptor blockers (ARBs)

Relax your blood vessels and lower blood pressure to decrease your heart's workload.

EXAMPLES: **Losartan, Valsartan, Irbesartan, Candesartan**

POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS: May cause dizziness, loose stools, cough, swelling of the lips, tongue and throat

Aldosterone receptor blockers

Trigger the body to remove excess sodium through urine. This lowers the volume of blood that the heart must pump.

EXAMPLES: **Spirolactone, Eplerenone**

POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS: Dizziness, upset stomach, high potassium (weakness, numbness)

Beta blockers

Slow your heart rate and lower your blood pressure to decrease your heart's workload.

EXAMPLES: **Atenolol, Carvedilol, Metoprolol**

POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS: Dizziness or drowsiness, fatigue (Check with your physician if you have asthma)

Calcium channel blockers

EXAMPLES: **Diltiazem, Verapamil, Amlodipine**

POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS: Dizziness or drowsiness, headache, constipation

Digoxin

Makes the heart beat stronger and pump more blood.

EXAMPLES: **Lanoxin**

POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS: Dizziness, upset stomach, loose stools

Diuretics

Help reduce fluid buildup in your lungs and swelling in your feet and ankles.

EXAMPLES: **Lasix, Bumex**

POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS: Dizziness, headache, lightheaded

Hydralazine hydrochloride

Helps relax your blood vessels so your heart doesn't work as hard to pump blood.

Examples: **Apresoline**

Possible Side Effects: lupus-like syndrome (joint pains)

Nitrates

Prevent and relieve chest pain

EXAMPLES: **Nitroglycerin, Ismo, Imdur**

POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS: headache, dizziness, weakness

STEPS TO PREVENT HEART FAILURE FROM GETTING WORSE

CERTAIN ACTIONS CAN WORSEN YOUR HEART FAILURE, SUCH AS:

- High altitude will affect how you feel. Talk to your doctor before travelling above 5000 feet.
- Jacuzzis or hot tubs may lower your blood pressure and make you dizzy or faint.
- Not following your diet (for example, eating salty foods).
- Forgetting to take your medicines.
- Drinking alcohol; smoking.

These actions can lead to a hospital stay. If you have trouble following your diet, talk with your doctor. He or she can help arrange for a dietitian to work with you. Avoid drinking alcohol.

Try to avoid respiratory infections like the flu and pneumonia. Ask your doctor or nurse about getting flu and pneumonia vaccines.

IF YOU HAVE HEART FAILURE, IT'S IMPORTANT TO KNOW:

- When to seek help. Ask your doctor when to make an office visit or get emergency care.
- Phone numbers for your doctor and hospital.
- Directions to your doctor's office and hospital and people who can take you there.
- A list of medicines you're taking.

EMOTIONAL ISSUES AND SUPPORT

Living with heart failure may cause fear, anxiety, depression, and stress. Talk about how you feel with your health care team. Talking to a professional counselor also can help. If you're very depressed, your doctor may recommend medicines or other treatments that can improve your quality of life.

Joining a patient support group may help you adjust to living with heart failure. You can see how other people who have the same symptoms have coped with them. Talk with your doctor about local support groups or check with an area medical center. Support from family and friends also can help relieve stress and anxiety. Let your loved ones know how you feel and what they can do to help you.

LIVING WELL WITH HEART FAILURE

Currently, heart failure has no cure. You'll likely have to take medicine and follow a treatment plan for the rest of your life.

Despite treatment, symptoms may get worse over time. You may not be able to do many of the things that you did before you had heart failure. However, if you take all the steps your doctor recommends, you can stay healthier longer. Researchers also might find new treatments that can help you in the future.

Watch heart failure on video for more information:

<http://stjudemedicalcenter.videosforhealth.com/>

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