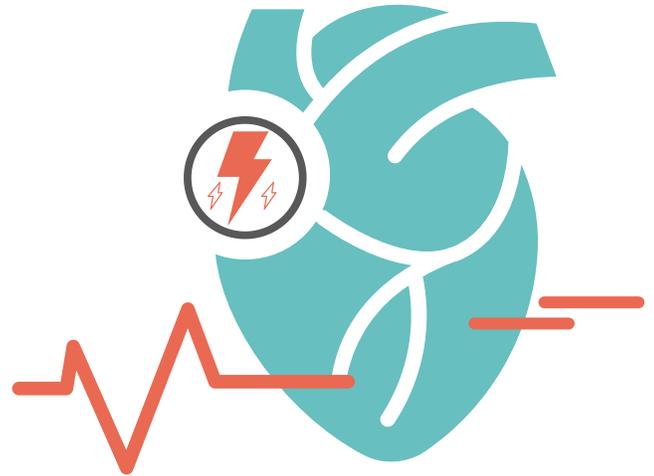




What is Congestive Heart Failure (CHF)?

Congestive heart failure is also sometimes called heart failure. Heart failure occurs when the heart doesn't pump well enough to keep up with the body's needs? take care of the body's needs for blood and oxygen.



Why doesn't heart pump well with CHF?

- The heart can stiffen which doesn't let it stretch normally and then it can't fill with blood like it should between beats.
- The heart muscle may become damaged causing weakness. It then can't squeeze hard enough to pump the blood out to the body properly.

How does the body deal with CHF?

- Heart Enlarges: at first the heart stretches to be able to squeeze more strongly. That helps it to pump more blood. If this continues the heart will become enlarged.
- Wall of the heart gets thicker: the muscle cells enlarge due how hard they are working to pump. This allows the heart to get stronger for awhile.
- Heart Pumps faster: the faster it pumps the more blood it sends out to the body.
- Blood vessels in the body contract (narrow) to raise blood pressure which helps make up for the hearts weakness.

7 Symptoms of CHF

- Shortness of breath when moving or lying down.
- Weakness and fatigue.
- Swollen legs, ankles and feet.
- Fast or irregular heartbeat.
- Cough or wheezing that doesn't go away and/or has white or pink mucus.
- Very fast weight gain from fluid building up.
- Chest pain if heart failure is caused by a heart attack.

As the body makes these changes, it may hide the heart failure, but it doesn't get rid of it. If heart failure goes untreated, these attempts by the body to help the problem will eventually be less and less effective, and symptoms will start or worsen.

Changes for Living with CHF



Medications and Side Effects:

- Cholesterol medicines (most commonly statins) are used for patients with different kinds of heart disease to keep cholesterol within healthy limits. They are also used for heart disease prevention in people with diabetes. Statins sometimes have side effects like headaches, nausea, dizziness, intestinal problems, or muscle spasms or pain. Diabetics may experience an increase in blood sugar. If you start having side effects, call your doctor. Don't stop taking medication unless your doctor tells you to. Your doctor may want to alter the type or dose of your statin. Your doctor may also suggest supplements to help; however, don't start any supplement without asking your doctor first. There are other medications to treat high cholesterol, so work with your doctor to decide what is right for you.
- High blood pressure can be treated with a variety of medications. Many blood pressure medications have minimal to no side effects. When side effects occur, they are usually headaches, dizziness, or nausea. Side effects usually ease after a few weeks. If side effects continue or you can't tolerate them, call your doctor. There are a lot of different blood pressure medications, so your doctor can try a different one. Never stop your blood pressure medicine, cold turkey. Most must be tapered under a doctor's strict supervision.

Lifestyle changes:

Always talk about your lifestyle choices with your PCP (primary care provider).

- Every morning weigh yourself– let your PCP know if you have: weight gain of 3+ pounds in one day, 5+ pounds per week, or whatever weight gains you PCP has told you to report.
- Your PCP may ask you to track your daily fluid intake. You may be asked to limit your intake, but be sure you are doing this under the guidance of your primary care provider.
- Drink no more than one or two 8 ounce cups of caffeinated drinks a day.
- If you drink alcohol, and your doctor has approved you to do so, limit it to no more than 1-2 drinks per day for men and 1 drink per day for women. 1 drink= 12 oz beer, 5 oz wine, or 1.5 oz distilled spirits.
- Eat heart healthy foods: lots of fruits/veggies, whole grains, poultry without skin, fish, nuts and legumes, vegetable oils except tropical oils (coconut, palm, etc)
- If told by doctor to exercise, start with moderate exercise and make exercise a part of your day.
- Manage stress: take a few deep breaths when angry, sit quietly for 10-20 per day. Stress raises blood pressure which keeps the heart tense and makes it harder for blood to fill it properly. This causes the heart to work even harder to pump blood out to the body and can worsen CHF.
- Follow your PCP's guidelines and call with concerning changes.

Sources:

<https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/heart-failure>

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/heart-failure/symptoms-causes/syc-20373142>

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/high-blood-cholesterol/in-depth/statin-side-effects/art-20046013>