

CHF – DP
CHF – TX
CHF – M
CHF – FU

HEART FAILURE – DISEASE PROCESS
HEART FAILURE – TREATMENT
HEART FAILURE – MEDICATIONS
HEART FAILURE – FOLLOW UP

Heart Failure

What is heart failure?

Heart failure means that your heart does not pump your blood as well as it should. When the heart is not pumping well, fluid can build up in your body.

What causes heart failure?

Heart failure has many different causes. The most common ones are:

- ◆ Coronary artery disease (narrowing of the blood vessels to the heart)
- ◆ Cardiomyopathy (heart muscle problems)
- ◆ High blood pressure
- ◆ Problems with the heart valves
- ◆ Abnormal heart rhythms or beats
- ◆ Alcohol or other harmful substances
- ◆ Congenital heart disease (heart problems from birth)

What are the symptoms of heart failure?

- ◆ Shortness of breath when walking upstairs or even on flat ground
- ◆ Shortness of breath when lying down flat in bed
- ◆ Waking up in the night, suddenly breathless
- ◆ General tiredness or weakness
- ◆ Swelling of the legs (usually, just the feet and ankles)
- ◆ Rapid weight gain (1 or 2 pounds a day for 3 days in a row)
- ◆ Constant cough

What kind of treatment will I need?

Much can be done to improve the heart's pumping but there is no cure. Your treatment will include lifestyle changes and medication:

- ◆ Cut down the amount of salt you use. Limit the fluids you drink to 6 cups of liquid each day.
- ◆ Do not drink alcohol.
- ◆ Most people with heart failure can still exercise. Your doctor will help you decide how much exercise you should do, and what kind of exercise is best.

CHF – DP	HEART FAILURE – DISEASE PROCESS
CHF – TX	HEART FAILURE – TREATMENT
CHF – M	HEART FAILURE – MEDICATIONS
CHF – FU	HEART FAILURE – FOLLOW UP

What kind of medicines will I need to take?

Many different medicines are used to treat heart failure. You may need one or more medicines, depending on your symptoms and test results. There are several medicines used to treat heart failure:

- ◆ ACE inhibitors (like Lisinopril) help open your arteries and improve blood flow.
- ◆ Diuretics (like Furosemide or Lasix) are often called "water pills" because they make you urinate more often. They also help keep fluid from building up in your body especially in your lungs and ankles.
- ◆ Beta blockers (like Atenolol or Metoprolol) can improve blood flow and may prevent heartbeat problems.
- ◆ Digoxin helps the heart pump better. It also helps if you have certain types of irregular heartbeat.

How often will I need to see my doctor?

- At first, you may need to see your doctor often (even every week) to check on the effect of the medicine. After your doctor has adjusted your medicine, you may need to be seen less often.
- You will need to have blood tests to check your potassium level and kidney function. You may need a chest Xray, EKG, and echocardiogram (an ultrasound test to get pictures of the heart).
- Many people take the medicines without any problems. If you think you maybe having side effects, you should talk to your doctor. It's very important that you take your medicine correctly. You should not change the amount of medicine you are taking without asking your doctor first.

When do I need to call my doctor?

- ◆ If you are becoming more short of breath.
- ◆ If you are gaining weight; this may mean your body is holding on to fluid. You may need more medicine. Weigh yourself each day before breakfast.
- ◆ If your ankles are becoming more swollen.

Many people with heart failure lead active lives. However, you will probably need to make some changes. Talk to your doctor if you are having trouble making these changes.