

Congestive Heart Failure

What is Congestive Heart Failure?

Congestive Heart Failure (CHF), also referred to as heart failure, is a chronic condition in which the heart cannot pump enough oxygenated blood to meet the needs of the body's other organs.

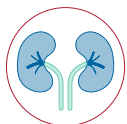
Your heart is still pumping blood throughout your body, just not as efficiently as a healthy heart. In CHF, your cells aren't being supplied with enough blood and oxygen,

which can lead to feeling tired and short of breath. Everyday activities such as walking, climbing stairs or carrying groceries can become difficult.

There is no cure for congestive heart failure, but a full, enjoyable life is still possible when the condition is managed with medications, lifestyle changes and medical supervision.

Sign or Symptom	If you have CHF, you may experience...	Why it Happens
Shortness of breath (dyspnea)	Breathlessness during activity, at rest, or while sleeping, which may come on suddenly and wake you up. You often have difficulty breathing while lying flat and may need to prop up your upper body on pillows. You often complain of waking up tired or feeling anxious.	Blood "backs up" in the pulmonary veins (the vessels that return blood from the lungs to the heart) because the heart can't keep up. This causes fluid to leak into the lungs making it feel like you're trying to breathe under water.
Persistent coughing or wheezing	Coughing that produces white or pink, blood-tinged mucus.	Fluid build up in the lungs.
Buildup of excess fluid in body tissues, which causes swelling (edema)	Swelling in the feet, ankles, legs or abdomen; or weight gain. You may find that your shoes, socks or pants feel tight.	As bloodflow out of the heart slows, blood returning to the heart through the veins backs up, causing fluid to build up in the tissues. The kidneys are less able to dispose of sodium (salt) and water, also causing fluid retention in the tissues.
Tiredness, fatigue	A tired feeling all the time and difficulty with everyday activities, such as shopping, climbing stairs, carrying groceries or walking.	The heart can't pump enough blood to meet the needs of the body. The body diverts blood away from less vital organs, particularly muscles in the limbs, and sends it to the heart and brain.
Lack of appetite, nausea	A feeling of being full or sick to your stomach.	The digestive system receives less blood, causing problems with digestion.
Confusion, impaired thinking	Memory loss and feelings of disorientation.	Changing levels of certain substances in the blood, such as sodium, can cause confusion.
Increased heart rate	Heart palpitations, which feel like your heart is racing or throbbing.	To "make up for" the loss in pumping capacity, the heart beats faster.

Common Complications of Chronic Heart Failure



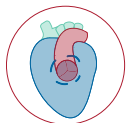
Kidney Damage or Failure

Severe kidney damage could lead to dialysis



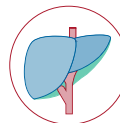
Heart Rhythm Problems

Palpitations and arrhythmias



Heart Valve Problems

The valves in your heart can become damaged and weaker from the strain of your failing pump



Liver Damage

Fluid in the liver can cause damage and scarring to the liver

Managing Chronic Heart Failure

Your provider may prescribe certain medications to help your heart pump more efficiently and to help with swelling. Always take your medications as directed by your provider.

There are additional changes that can help you manage your heart failure and live a full and active life. **These changes include:**



Lifestyle

- ◆ **Get vaccinated:** Ask your provider about getting the influenza and pneumonia vaccines
- ◆ **Stop smoking:** Smoking damages blood vessels and can increase blood pressure
- ◆ **Limit alcohol:** Alcohol may interact with some medications and can further weaken your heart muscle

- ◆ **Be active:** Moderate activity helps keep your body healthier, which can reduce the stress on your heart
- ◆ **Reduce stress:** Increased stress levels can increase your blood pressure and make your heart beat faster
 - Find ways to reduce stress such as deep breathing and spending time doing things you enjoy
- ◆ **Sleep easy:** Keep your head propped up on a pillow or wedge if you have trouble breathing at night

Diet

- ◆ **Eat a healthy diet:** Try to eat food such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains and lean protein.
- ◆ **Limit sodium (salt) in your diet:** Too much sodium can make you retain fluid which can increase swelling, cause weight gain and shortness of breath. Your provider may instruct you to keep your sodium below a certain number of grams per day.
- ◆ **Limit saturated or 'trans' fats in your diet:** Too many of these types of fats can cause build up of fat in your blood and cause your heart to work harder.
- ◆ **Talk with your provider and a dietitian about additional nutrition guidelines and information.**

Weight Management

- ◆ **Discuss weight monitoring with your provider:** Ask your provider how often you should weigh yourself and when your provider needs to be notified of weight gain.
- ◆ **Keep track of your weight and bring the record to your appointments:** This can help your provider determine if you are retaining fluid and need any adjustment in your medications.
- ◆ **Limit fluids if instructed by your provider:** Your provider may instruct you to limit the amount of fluids you drink in a day to decrease the amount of swelling.

Be Proactive

- ◆ **Keep a current list of your medications.**
- ◆ **Track your blood pressure:** If instructed by your provider, keep track of your blood pressure daily and bring the records with you to your appointments.

Take an Active Role in Your Health

- ◆ **Keep an accurate log of your medications:** Don't stop any medications without first talking with your provider and carry a list of all of your medications with you at all times.
- ◆ **Be aware of changes in your body:** Check for any increased swelling in your legs, ankles and feet daily. Notify your provider if swelling worsens.
- ◆ **Prepare a list of questions before your medical appointment:** Make sure you understand everything your provider wants you to do before you leave your appointment.

My CHF Information

Provider Name: _____

Clinic Location: _____

Phone Number: _____

- Call if my weight increases _____ pounds in _____ hours or days
- Do not have more than _____ mg of sodium per day
- Do not drink more than _____ ounce(s) of fluid per day
- Call my provider for the following symptoms:
