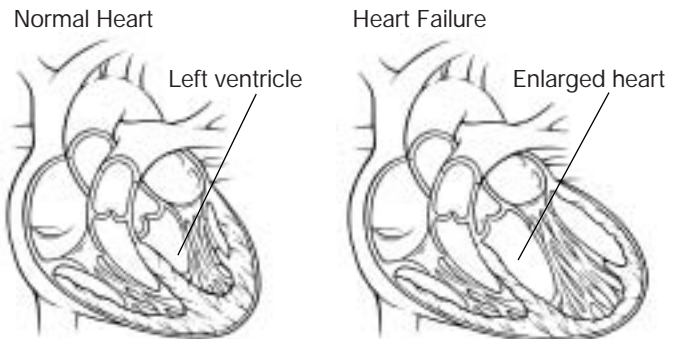


What is Congestive Heart Failure?

If you have congestive heart failure, you're not alone. About 5.0 million Americans are living with it today. In fact, it's one of the most common reasons people 65 and older go into the hospital. It can take years for heart failure to develop. So if you don't yet have it but are at risk for it, you should make lifestyle changes now to prevent it!



Heart failure symptoms usually develop over weeks and months as your heart becomes weaker and less able to pump the blood that your body needs. Heart failure usually results in an enlarged heart (left ventricle).

Does your heart stop?

When you have heart failure, it doesn't mean that your heart has stopped beating. It means that your heart isn't pumping blood as it should. The heart keeps working, but the body's need for blood and oxygen isn't being met.

Heart failure can get worse if it's not treated. It's very important to do what your doctor tells you to do. When you make healthy changes, you can feel a lot better and enjoy life much more!

What can happen?

- Heart does not pump enough blood.
 - Blood backs up in veins.
 - Fluid builds up, causing swelling in feet, ankles and legs. This is called "edema."
 - Body holds too much fluid.
 - Fluid builds up in lungs, called "pulmonary congestion."
 - Body does not get enough blood, food and oxygen.
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What are the signs?

- Shortness of breath, especially when lying down
 - Tired, run-down feeling
 - Swelling in feet, ankles and legs
 - Weight gain from fluid buildup
 - Confusion or can't think clearly
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What are the causes?

- Clogged arteries don't let enough blood flow to the heart.
- Past heart attack has done some damage to the heart muscle.
- Heart defects present since birth.
- High blood pressure.
- Heart valve disease.
- Diseases of the heart muscle.
- Infection of the heart and/or heart valves.

How is it treated?

- Rest.
- Eat less salt and fewer salty foods.
- Surgery may be needed, in some cases.
- Your doctor may give you medicine to strengthen your heart and water pills to help your body let go of fluids.

What can I do?

- Follow your doctor's advice.
- Take your medicine the way you should.
- Weigh daily to check for increased fluid.
- Eat a healthful diet that's low in salt and saturated fat.

How can I learn more?

1. Talk to your doctor, nurse or other health-care professionals. If you have heart disease or have had a stroke, members of your family also may be at higher risk. It's very important for them to make changes now to lower their risk.
 2. Call 1-800-AHA-USA1 (1-800-242-8721), or visit americanheart.org to learn more about heart disease.
 3. For information on stroke, call 1-888-4-STROKE (1-888-478-7653) or visit us online at StrokeAssociation.org.
- We have many other fact sheets and educational booklets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk, manage disease or care for a loved one.
- Knowledge is power, so *Learn and Live!*

What are the Warning Signs of Heart Attack and Stroke?

Warning Signs of Heart Attack:

Some heart attacks are sudden and intense, but most of them start slowly with mild pain or discomfort with one or more of these symptoms:

- Chest discomfort
- Discomfort in other areas of the upper body
- Shortness of breath with or without chest discomfort
- Other signs including breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea or lightheadedness

Warning Signs of Stroke:

- Sudden weakness or numbness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body
- Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding
- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes
- Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination
- Sudden, severe headache with no known cause

Learn to recognize a stroke. Time lost is brain lost.

Call 9-1-1... Get to a hospital immediately if you experience signs of a heart attack or stroke!

Do you have questions or comments for your doctor or nurse?

- Take a few minutes to write your own questions for the next time you see your healthcare provider. For example:

How much salt may I eat? _____

How much weight gain is too much? _____