

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.

Why doesn't heart pump well 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.
- Heart Grows more muscle mass: it gets more muscle mass because the cells that squeeze get bigger. At first this lets the heart pump stronger
- 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.

Changes for Living with CHF

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 1/2 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 such as walking. Make daily 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.

Possible Causes of CHF

- Coronary Artery Disease (cholesterol build up in vessels) and heart attacks.
- High blood pressure.
- Damaged heart valves or muscle.
- Myocarditis– inflammation of the heart muscle.
- Congenital heart defect– heart problem present at birth.
- Irregular heart rhythms.
- Long term diseases like diabetes, hyperthyroid or hypothyroid.

Sources:

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

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