



**UNDERSTANDING HEART FAILURE**



***Heart Failure*** *(or congestive heart failure) is when your heart cannot pump (eject) enough blood to meet your body’s needs, resulting in symptoms like fatigue, shortness of breath, swelling, and lightheadedness. People often have an enlarged or “stretched-out” heart.*

**Heart Failure is described as either:**

* SYSTOLIC dysfunction, where the heart doesn’t pump out all of the blood in the left ventricle (the main pump of the heart). The left ventricular ejection fraction **(LVEF) is** **less than** **40%.**
* DIASTOLIC dysfunction, where the heart is stiff and rigid, limiting the amount of blood that can fill the ventricle. **LVEF is greater than 40%.**

**What causes Heart Failure?**

Heart damage from: heart attacks, high blood pressure, valve problems, alcohol abuse, infections, congenital defects, and even unknown reasons.

**Signs & Symptoms:**

* Rapid weight gain ♥ Shortness of breath ♥ Fatigue
* Swelling of legs, feet, hands ♥ Dizziness/lightheadedness

**TREATMENT of Heart Failure:**

American Heart Association 1-800-242-8721

<http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/HealthcareProfessional/GetWithTheGuidelinesHFStroke/Interactive-Workbooks-Patient-> Page\_UCM\_312470\_Article.jsp

***For More Information…***

* Heart Failure Society of America

 [www.abouthf.org](http://www.abouthf.org)

* American Association of Heart Failure Nurses

 [www.aahfnpatienteducation.com/index.php](http://www.aahfnpatienteducation.com/index.php)

**SELF-CARE BEHAVIORS**

1. **See your provider within 1 week of discharge from the hospital**:
* Early follow-up is linked with feeling better and staying healthier at home.

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1. **Weigh yourself every day, in the morning after going to the bathroom**:
* Write it down!
* Call your provider if you gain 3 pounds overnight OR 5 pounds in 5 days.
1. **Low Salt Diet - 2000 mg:** (2 grams) of sodium (salt) each day.

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* Take the salt shakers off the table, and use other seasonings instead.
* Read nutrition labels and add up your daily salt intake.
1. **Exercise:**
* Goal = 30 minutes total of activity every day. Start slow, and build up to this.

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* Stop if you have chest pain, shortness of breath, nausea, or dizziness.
1. **Quit Smoking:**
* Smoking reduces the oxygen in your blood, and makes your heart work harder.
1. **Call your Provider (MD, NP, PA) for:**

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* Weight gain as above, worsened breathing or swelling, dizziness, lightheadedness
1. **CALL 911 for**:
* chest pain/tightness, extreme shortness of breath, feeling like you’re going to pass out

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**MEDICATIONS**

*Most patients with heart failure need to take a combination of several medications in order to see the benefits of having fewer symptoms, avoiding hospitalization, and living longer*

**It’s very important to take your medicines exactly as prescribed, and to not skip doses!**

* **BETA BLOCKERS:**  (Block stress hormones that are harmful to the heart)

**\*metoprolol (Lopressor, Toprol) \*carvedilol (Coreg) \*atenolol (Tenormin)**

# Side effects – low blood pressure, dizziness, low heart rate, tiredness

* **ACE INHIBITORS & ARB’s:** (Block stress hormones that are harmful to the heart)

**(Angiotensin Converting Enzyme Inhibitors & Angiotensin Receptor Blockers**)

* ACE Inhibitors: **\*lisinopril (Zestril, Prinivil) \*enalapril (Vasotec)**
* ARB’s: **\*losartan (Cozaar) \*valsartan (Diovan) \*irbesartan (Avapro)**

# Side Effects – low blood pressure, high potassium, swelling of mouth/lips, dry cough

* **ALDOSTERONE ANTAGONISTS:** (Block stress hormones that are harmful to the heart)

**\*spironolactone (Aldactone) \*eplerenone (Inspra)**

*Side Effects: - low blood pressure, high potassium, breast tenderness with spironolactone*

* **DIURETICS/WATER PILLS:** (Rid body of extra fluid)

**\*furosemide (Lasix) \*bumetanide (Bumex) \*metolazone (Zaroxolyn)**

# Side effects – low blood pressure, dizziness, frequent urination, low potassium

* **DIGOXIN:** (Slows heart rate, helps pump more blood with each beat)

**\*digitalis (Lanoxin, Digoxin, Digitek)**

Side Effects – slow heart rate, yellow-tinted vision, loss of appetite, stomach pain, nausea, diarrhea, tiredness, weakness.