

CONGESTIVE HEART FAILURE

Facts

“Heart failure” refers to when a person’s heart pumps weaker than normal. When this happens, blood circulates more slowly while the heart rate increases. This can lead to weakening of the heart’s walls. For some, the body’s kidneys may cause the body to retain fluid and salt. When this fluid builds up in a person’s arms, legs, lungs or other organs, it is known as congestive heart failure.

Symptoms

Symptoms can range from none to severe and may come and go. They may include:

- ◆ Congested lungs
- ◆ Fluid and water retention
- ◆ Dizziness, fatigue, and weakness
- ◆ Rapid or irregular heartbeats

Diagnosis

The doctor will conduct a complete physical exam as well as other tests to determine the cause and severity of the heart failure, which may include: blood tests, chest X-ray, echocardiogram, the Ejection Fraction (EF), Electrocardiogram (EKG or ECG), cardiac catheterization, and a stress test.

Causes and Factors

- ◆ Coronary artery disease
- ◆ Heart attack
- ◆ Cardiomyopathy
- ◆ Conditions that overwork the heart



Stages of Heart Failure

- ◆ Stage A: High risk of developing heart failure (pre-heart failure)
- ◆ Stage B: Diagnosed with systolic left ventricular dysfunction but never had symptoms of heart failure (pre-heart failure)
- ◆ Stage C: Known systolic heart failure and current or prior symptoms
- ◆ Stage D: Systolic heart failure and presence of advanced symptoms after receiving recommended care

Treatment

Treatment options are more diverse and effective than ever before. Practicing tight control over medications and lifestyle changes are crucial (diet, exercise, etc.). Other treatments may include: ventricular assist devices, heart transplant, research therapies and continuous infusion of intravenous inotropic drugs.

Living with CHF:

- ◆ Keep blood pressure low
- ◆ Maintain fluid balance
- ◆ Limit sodium in diet
- ◆ Monitor weight
- ◆ Take medications as prescribed
- ◆ Schedule regular doctor appointments
- ◆ Stop smoking or chewing tobacco
- ◆ Control cholesterol levels and diabetes
- ◆ Exercise regularly
- ◆ Do not drink alcohol

For more information on Chronic Disease Self-Management Workshops to help you manage your CHF, visit www.PeninsulaHomeCare.com.



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