

**Office of Integrated Health
Health & Safety Information**

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Congestive Heart Failure

What is Congestive Heart Failure?

Heart failure happens when the heart cannot pump enough blood and oxygen to support other organs in your body. Fluid may begin to build up in the body resulting in an increase work load of the heart. Heart failure is a serious condition that requires medical care.

Signs and Symptoms of Congestive Heart Failure

Common symptoms of heart failure include:

- Shortness of breath during daily activities
- Having trouble breathing when lying down
- Weight gain with swelling in the feet, legs, ankles, or stomach
- Generally feeling tired or weak

Congestive Heart Failure Diagnosis and Treatment

Early diagnosis and treatment can improve quality and length of life for individuals who have heart failure. Treatment usually involves taking medications, reducing sodium (salt) in the diet, and getting daily physical activity. One medication that may be prescribed is medication in a class of drugs called diuretics. Diuretics are often referred to as “water pills”. These types of medications help to reduce water retention and therefore help reduce the work load on the heart.

Medications adherence is very important for individuals with Congestive Heart failure.

Prevention of Congestive Heart Failure

Diseases that damage your heart also increase your risk for heart failure. Some of these diseases include: coronary heart disease, high blood pressure, and diabetes. Unhealthy behaviors like smoking and a sedentary lifestyle can also increase an individual’s risk for heart failure.

Recommendations

Treatment can help relieve symptoms and make daily activities easier. It also can reduce the chance that individuals will need to go to the hospital. Medication management and treatment plans should be followed closely and revised as needed by the medical team. Keep track of weight changes through daily weights; weigh individuals at the same time each day.

Resources

<https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health-topics/heart-failure>

https://www.cdc.gov/dhdsp/data_statistics/fact_sheets/fs_heart_failure.htm

http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/Conditions/HeartFailure/UnderstandYourRiskforHeartFailure/Understand-Your-Risk-for-Heart-Failure_UCM_002046_Article.jsp#.WonYSfmmHIU