

What You Should Know About Congestive Heart Failure (CHF)



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Exercise

Your exercise program should be fun and not exhausting. When choosing activities you enjoy, consider:

- Your health and physical capabilities
- Your skills
- Seasonal variations
- Activities that promote endurance
- Strength and flexibility
- Your interests
- Equipment and facilities needed
- Scheduling
- Ability to include family or friends if you desire

Other considerations

- Suitable, properly fitted shoes can prevent aching feet and strained muscles.
- Comfortable, loose fitting clothing is a good idea. Consider the temperature and humidity, and avoid extremes in either.
- Drink water (staying within your fluid allowance, if you have one) before, during, and after your activity sessions.



Post Discharge Follow up

The Post Discharge Nurse Case Manager, Debbie Crabtree, RN will contact you within a couple days of discharge to check on your progress. If you have any questions or concerns about your care plan, medications, or your health once you are at home, feel free to contact Debbie.

Debbie can be reached at 443-643-4261, Monday – Friday, 8:00 am – 4:30 pm

It is also important that you contact your doctor and make an appointment to be seen in his/her office within 3-5 days after being discharged from the hospital.



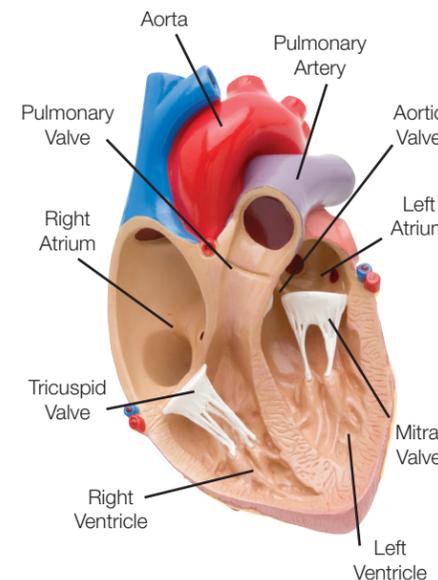
CHF



Symptoms

- Congestive Heart Failure (CHF) is a condition that weakens your heart causing it to pump less blood with each beat and work harder to meet your body's needs.
- Slower blood flow causes fluid to back up in your lungs and can lead to breathing problems. The kidney's also slow down and remove less salt and water from the body, sometimes leading to swelling in the legs, feet and abdomen.

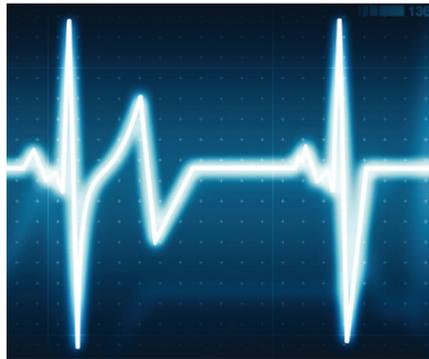
Signs/symptoms	Left-sided CHF	Right-sided CHF
Pitting edema	Mild to moderate swelling of legs/feet	Moderate to severe swelling of legs/feet
Fluid retention	Fluid <i>in</i> lungs Fluid <i>around</i> lungs	Abdomen (ascites)
Neck veins	Mild to moderate neck vein distention/bulging	Severe neck vein distention/bulging
Shortness of breath (SOB)	Prominent, night time dyspnea	Present, but not as prominent
Gastrointestinal	Present, not as prominent as right-sided CHF	Loss of appetite, bloating, constipation



The Heart

- The heart has four chambers. The top two small chambers are called the right and left atriums. The bottom two larger chambers are called ventricles.
- A wall of muscle called a septum separates the four chambers. The septum runs right to left and top to bottom in the heart.
- The right atrium and the right ventricle are separated by a valve/flap called the tricuspid valve.
- The left atrium and the left ventricle are separated by a valve/flap called the mitral valve.
- The right atrium gets the blood from your body. The blood flows from the right atrium through the tricuspid valve into the right ventricle.
- The right ventricle pumps the blood which is now oxygen poor to your lungs through the pulmonary valve. The blood picks up oxygen while in the lungs and returns to your heart through the left atrium.
- Blood leaves the left atrium through the mitral valve into the left ventricle.
- The left ventricle is the largest and strongest chamber in your heart. The ventricle walls are about a half-inch thick. These walls have enough force to push the oxygen rich blood through the aorta and aortic valve, and into your body.

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- A chest X-ray shows the size of your heart.
- EKG and a heart monitor shows the electrical activity of your heart.
- Echocardiogram (ECHO), a painless test that uses ultrasound waves, not only shows how well your heart is pumping, but also the thickness and function of the heart muscle, and if there are any valve problems.
- Lab tests will be done to check your blood and urine for any unusual levels. These may include cholesterol, triglycerides, blood sugar, troponin and/or CPK, and pro-BPN, a hormone that is made when your heart is under stress.

Evaluation



Medications

- **ACE inhibitors** - Lowers your blood pressure by preventing the body from making a chemical that causes blood vessels to decrease in size. (*Captopril, Lisinipril, Enalapril*).
- **Digoxin** - Makes the heart pump more strongly and may control some types of irregular heartbeats.
- **Diuretics** - "Water pills". Helps the kidneys remove extra fluid and salt from the body. Makes it easier for the heart to pump and will increase your urine output. (*Hydrochlorothiazide, Furosemide, Spironolactone*).
- **Beta Blocker** - Keeps your heart rate from increasing and helps to lower your blood pressure. (*Carvedilol, Metoprolol*).
- **Nitrates** - Helps to open and relax the blood vessels. This makes it easier for the blood to flow. (*Nitrostat, Isordil, Nitro-Dur, Nitroglycerine*).
- **Potassium supplements** - Replaces potassium. Potassium is lost in the urine in larger amounts than usual when you take some fluid pills/water pills. (*K-Dur*).
- **Aspirin or anticoagulants** - Helps to prevent blood clots. (*ASA, Coumadin, Miradon*).



Daily Weigh-Ins & Weight Charts

- Weigh yourself first thing in the morning, after emptying your bladder and before you eat.
- Weigh yourself either in your night clothes, or without clothes. Be sure to do it the same way each day.
- Using the weight chart provided; fill in the results along with the date and time you weighed yourself.
- Take your weight chart with you whenever you see you doctor.

Call your doctor if you gain:	2 pounds	In one (1) day
	3 or more pounds	In forty-eight (48) hours
	5 pounds	In one (1) week



Blood Pressure & Pulse Monitoring

Blood pressure refers to the force of the blood pushing against the walls of your arteries. Blood pressure readings are written as two numbers (i.e. 120/80). The top number is when the heart beats. The bottom number is when the heart is at rest, between beats.

- Check blood pressure and pulse every Monday and Thursday morning.
- Use the same arm each day.
- Call your doctor with any changes.



Low Sodium Diet

Because sodium/salt causes your body to retain fluid, your doctor can order a low-sodium diet. Other ways you can limit your salt intake are:

- Don't add salt to food while cooking or at the table.
- Take the salt shaker off the table and replace with *Mrs. Dash* seasoning.
- Read labels to check the amount of sodium in each serving.
- Do NOT use a salt substitute unless approved by your doctor.



Fluid Allowance

- Your fluid allowance is based on your body's needs and how well it can get rid of fluids. Every body is different.
- 120 cc = ½ cup = 4 ounces. Use a measuring cup to find out exactly how much fluid your favorite glass or cup holds. For example, if you are discharged on a 1500 cc daily fluid allowance, you may have a total of twelve (12) ½ cup servings of fluid a day.
- All liquids, even the milk on your cereal, soup, Jello, pudding, ice, and ice cream (if melted), must be counted.
- Each time you take in fluids, write it down, and add to the total.
- Save a portion for the evening since this can be a difficult time without fluids, especially if you take nighttime medications.
- Physical activity and other medical and physical factors are taken into consideration when determining your fluid allowance.