



Heart Failure

What is Heart Failure?

Heart failure is a condition in which the heart can't pump blood the way it should. In some cases, the heart can't fill with enough blood. In other cases, the heart can't send blood to the rest of the body with enough force. Some people have both problems. Heart failure does not mean the heart has stopped working. Rather, it means that the heart's pumping power is weaker than normal. With heart failure, blood moves through the heart and body at a slower rate, and pressure in the heart increases. As a result, the heart cannot pump enough oxygen and nutrients to meet the body's needs.

What causes Heart Failure?

Conditions that damage the heart muscle or make it work too hard can cause heart failure. Over time, the heart weakens. It isn't able to fill with and/or pump blood as well as it should. The most common causes of heart failure are: Coronary artery disease, High Blood pressure, and Diabetes. Treating these problems can prevent or improve heart failure.

Coronary Artery Disease: Occurs when a fatty material called plaque builds up in your coronary arteries. These arteries supply oxygen-rich blood to your heart. Plaque narrows the arteries, causing less blood to flow to your heart muscle. This can lead to chest pain, heart attack and heart damage.

Diabetes: This disease occurs when the level of sugar in the blood is high. The body doesn't make enough insulin or doesn't use its insulin properly. Insulin is a hormone that helps convert food to energy. High sugar levels can damage blood vessels around the heart.

Other diseases and conditions that can lead to heart failure are:-

- Heart Muscle Disease: These diseases may be present at birth or due to injury or infection
- Heart Valve Disorders: These problems may be present at birth or due to infections, heart attacks, or damage from heart disease
- Treatments for cancer, such as radiation and chemotherapy
- Arrhythmias (Irregular heartbeats): These heart problems may be present at birth or due to heart disease or heart defects
- Congenital Heart Defects: These heart problems are present at birth
- Thyroid Disorders: Having either too much or too little thyroid hormone in the body
- Alcohol abuse
- HIV/AIDS
- Cocaine and other illegal drug use.

High Blood Pressure: Blood pressure is the force of blood pushing against the walls of the arteries. Blood pressure is “high” if it stays at or above 140/90 mmHg over a period of time. High blood pressure stiffens blood vessels and makes the heart work harder. Without treatment, the heart may be damaged.

What are Signs and symptoms of Heart Failure?

The most common symptoms of heart failure are breathlessness, tiredness and swollen feet and ankles.

How is Heart Failure diagnosed?

Your doctor will want to examine you, and talk about your medical history and the symptoms that you have been having. You may need to have other tests which may include blood tests, electrocardiogram (ECG) and echocardiogram (Echo)

Heart Failure treatment and management.

By taking medication and making changes to your lifestyle, you can control and improve your condition. Your Doctor may prescribe a combination of medicines to improve your symptoms.

You can control your symptoms by:

1. Weighing yourself regularly and maintaining a healthy weight
2. Watching the amount of fluid you drink each day - your GP or nurse will be able to advise you on how much fluid you should have
3. Cutting down on salt
4. Eating a healthy balanced diet
5. Drinking alcohol only in moderation
6. Stop smoking
7. Keeping active.

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