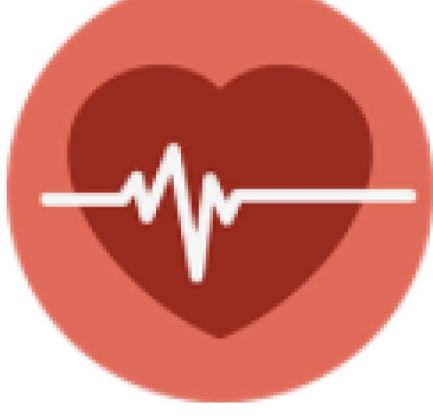


Heart failure

Heart failure: Don't ignore your heart
How do You know You have heart failure?
Who's at risk?
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Treatment
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Heart failure: Don't ignore your heart



Heart failure occurs as a result of having a weakened or damaged heart. In this condition, the heart is not able to pump enough blood to the body, or the heart muscle does not relax completely to fill with enough blood.^{1,2}

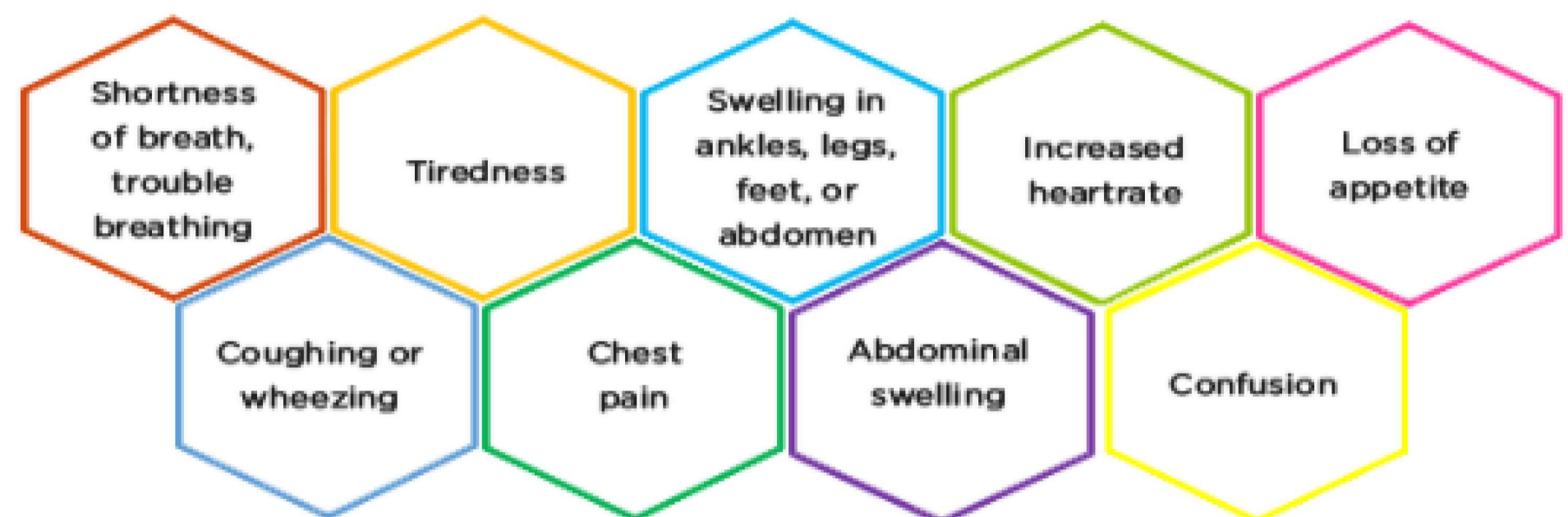
Heart failure can affect the left side of the heart, the right side, or both.^{1,3}

- In **left-sided heart failure**, the heart cannot pump enough oxygenated blood to the body. There are 2 types of left-sided heart failure– **systolic failure** where the heart cannot pump blood back to the body with enough force and **diastolic failure** where the heart becomes stiff and cannot relax properly to allow enough blood to fill into the heart chamber.
- In **right-sided heart failure**, the heart cannot pump enough blood to the lungs to be oxygenated. It usually occurs as a result of left-sided heart failure.

How do You know You have heart failure?



There is no single test to confirm a diagnosis of heart failure. Heart failure is often suspected initially based on a person's symptoms which can vary depending on the type and severity of heart failure. The most common symptoms include:^{1,4}



Your doctor will diagnose heart failure based on the following examinations^{1,5}



Complete medical and family histories



Physical examination



Laboratory tests including blood tests, liver and kidney function tests, cholesterol/lipid measurements, chest x-ray, and electrocardiogram

Who's at risk?

The most common causes of heart failure are coronary artery disease, high blood pressure, and diabetes. Other conditions that can lead to heart failure include infections in the heart, heart defects from birth, abnormal heartbeat, thyroid disorder, alcohol or drug abuse, and use of cancer medications.^{1,6}

Heart failure is more common in people with the following risk factors:^{1,6}

- ⚠ Being 65 years or older
- ⚠ Being overweight
- ⚠ Had a previous heart attack
- ⚠ Being of African descent

Lifestyle changes

Some helpful tips to help reduce your risk of developing heart failure:⁷



Lose weight, if you are overweight or obese



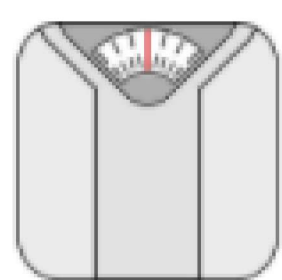
Stay physically active. Be sure to consult your doctor before starting any new exercise routines



Eat a healthy diet consisting of vegetables, fruit, whole grains, low-fat dairy, and lean meats. Avoid foods with high salt (causes buildup of extra fluid) or saturated fat (increases cholesterol)



Monitor your fluid intake. Drinking too much fluid can worsen heart failure



Check your weight daily. Excess fluids can cause weight gain



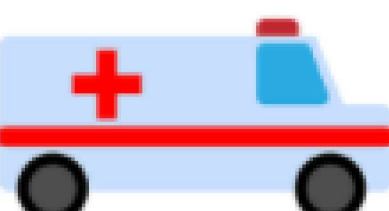
Quit smoking

Treatment



If you are diagnosed with chronic heart failure, your doctor may prescribe medicines to help your heart do its job better or help your body get rid of extra fluid build-up. Some commonly used medications and how they work are explained below:^{1,8}

ACE inhibitors	Widen blood vessels and lower blood pressure to decrease the heart's workload
Angiotensin receptor blockers	Work like ACE inhibitors, and are prescribed to those who cannot tolerate ACE inhibitors
Beta blockers	Slow heart rate and lower blood pressure to decrease the heart's workload
Diuretics (water pills)	Reduce fluid buildup in the body by causing more frequent urination
Aldosterone antagonists	Work like diuretics and works to reduce the amount of blood that the heart must pump
Digoxin	Increase the strength of the heart muscle so that it pumps with more force, and slows the heartbeat



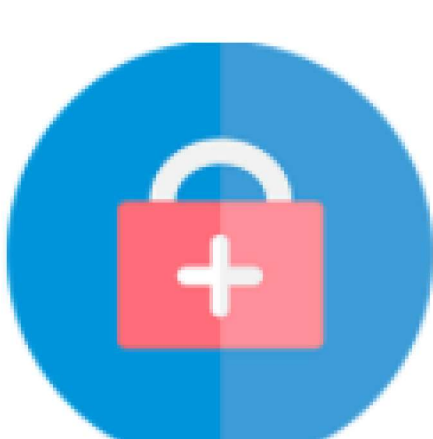
When heart failure worsens, and medication and lifestyle changes can no longer control the symptoms, a person may need surgery e.g., coronary bypass surgery, implanting a pacemaker-like device in the heart, or heart transplant.^{1,9}

Regular checkups^{1,10}



- It is important to understand the medical severity of the disease and follow your doctor's treatment plan.
- Any lifestyle modification, treatment, or medicine use should be administered as prescribed. Forgetting to take your medicines or not following your diet can worsen heart failure.
- You must speak with your doctor right away if there is any change in your symptoms, or if you do not feel well.
- Discuss with your doctor any warning signs that may alert you to a worsening of your condition.
- If you have side effects from your medicines, inform your doctor. They may adjust the dose or type of medicine to relieve the side effects.
- Regular checkups with the doctor will help you monitor symptoms.

Why is it important to treat?¹



- Heart failure symptoms may worsen over time and can lead to kidney or liver failure, sudden cardiac arrest (heart stops beating suddenly), and death.
- In most cases, lifelong lifestyle modifications and medications is needed that can slow down the progression of heart failure, reduce symptoms and improve quality of life.
- It is important that you work with your doctor to treat heart failure.

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