



Help Your Heart



heart failure

In older adults, the most common cause of heart failure is coronary artery disease, but you may also be at risk.

Other causes of heart failure include heart muscle damage (such as heart attack), heart valve disease and abnormal heart rhythms.

High blood pressure, obesity, diabetes, thyroid problems and alcohol or drug abuse can also contribute to heart failure.

Heart failure means that your heart is not working correctly. The main job of your heart is to pump oxygen-rich blood to your body. It is like a pump that pumps water out of a pool. If the pump is weak, not all of the water can be removed. Some of the water stays in the pool.

Heart failure occurs when the muscle of the heart wall weakens and enlarges, preventing your heart from pumping blood as well as it should. As a result, blood backs up in your veins. This causes fluid to back up in different parts of your body.

Because your heart is weakened, it pumps less blood to your organs, especially to your kidneys, which normally help your body remove extra fluid. Fluid often builds up in the legs, ankles and feet, but can also build up in your lungs and abdomen.

Symptoms

- difficulty breathing when lying flat
- shortness of breath
- waking up breathless at night
- dry, hacking cough that may get worse when you lie down



MINNEAPOLIS
HEART
INSTITUTE

AllinaHealth
ABBOTT
NORTHWESTERN
HOSPITAL

Children's
MINNESOTA



The Children's
Heart Clinic®

- swelling in your feet, ankles, legs, hands, lower back, abdomen
- weight gain of 3 pounds in 1 day or 5 pounds in 1 week
- extreme fatigue (tiredness)
- feeling dizzy, lightheaded
- unable to concentrate

Treatment

Heart failure can be treated with medicines to:

- help your heart muscle work better
- to help your body get rid of extra fluid.

Some people need oxygen for breathlessness. Some people can be treated with surgery or implanted cardiac devices.

What You Can Do

You may need to make some lifestyle changes to help your heart function and should always follow the advice of your adult congenital heart disease (ACHD) team. You can help manage your heart failure by:

- taking your medicine as directed
- weighing yourself every morning and writing down your weight
- calling your ACHD team if you gain 3 pounds in 1 day or 5 pounds in 1 week
- checking your blood pressure each day and writing down your numbers
- quitting smoking
- eating heart-healthy foods that are low in salt and saturated fat
- limiting what you drink to less than 8 cups or 2 liters each day
- avoiding or limiting alcohol and caffeine
- getting regular exercise
- losing weight, if advised
- getting enough rest.



Shake the Salt Habit

Limit your sodium (salt) to 1,500 to 2,000 milligrams (mg) each day.

Sodium causes your body to retain (keep) water.

If you eat more than 2,000 mg a day, your water pills won't work right or maybe not at all.

Remember: "low salt" does not mean "no salt." Your heart needs salt to work right. Without any salt, you also will not feel well.

