



## **What is Heart Failure?**

Heart Failure, sometimes known as congestive heart failure (CHF), occurs when the heart muscle doesn't pump blood as well as it should. The heart's main job is to pump the right amount of blood to all parts of the body.

Some symptoms of heart failure are not emergencies, but they can get worse if you do not pay attention to them. Do not ignore these symptoms. These symptoms are early signs that fluid is building up in your body and making it harder for your heart to pump right.

### **Major Signs and Symptoms of Heart failure**

- Shortness of breath, which can happen even during mild activity
- Tiredness and weakness with little effort
- Problems breathing when lying flat, needing to sleep in a recliner or propped up on pillows to make it easier to breathe
- Waking up at night coughing or short of breath
- Rapid weight gain from fluid buildup
- Swelling in the abdomen, legs, ankles and feet
- Fast or skipping heart beat
- Persistent cough or wheezing
- Lack of appetite and nausea
- Dizzy spells or feeling faint
- Confusion and/or having trouble concentrating

### **Treatment for Heart Failure**

With the right treatments and some adjustments in your daily life, you will feel better.

- Medications: take your medications exactly as directed.

- Track your symptoms every day.
- Weigh yourself at the same time every day to see if you are retaining fluid. Call the clinic if you have gained more than 2 pounds overnight or 5 pounds in one week.
- Follow a low-salt diet. Salt causes your body to retain fluid making it harder to breathe and harder for your heart to pump.
- Drink the right amount of fluids. Too much fluid can make the heart work too hard. Not enough fluid can cause you to become dehydrated. Ask your health care provider how much fluid you should be drinking.
- Reduce the workload on your heart by getting the correct balance of rest and activity as prescribed by your health care provider.
- Stop smoking (if you smoke).
- Lose weight if you are overweight.
- Drink alcohol sparingly, if at all.

It is important to talk with your health care provider about when you should call him/her and when to call 911.