

# Heart Failure

Symptoms and Treatments Guidebook



  
**Advent Health**



## The realities of heart failure and how to treat it.

### We're here to support you through your treatment.

You may be surprised to know that heart failure is a recurrent condition that affects one in five people over age 40.\* Right now, about 5.7 million Americans are living with heart failure. It is one of the most common reasons why people 65 and older go to the hospital.

In some cases, heart failure is reversible, but it remains a serious condition for which there is no cure. However, many people can live a full life when it is managed with the right medical treatment, medications and lifestyle changes. Our specialists have developed this guide to help you to better understand heart failure, and how to live with it in the most healthful way possible.

*\*Source: American Heart Association*



## The complex process of a simple heartbeat.

A simple heartbeat is a pretty complex process inside your body. To start, oxygenated blood coming back to your heart from the body and the lungs fills your heart's two upper chambers (the atria). As blood fills the atria, the mitral and tricuspid valves open and blood flows into the lower two chambers (the ventricles).

When your ventricles contract, the mitral and tricuspid valves close. This stops blood from flowing back into the atria and allows it to pump through the pulmonary and aortic valves. Then, the pulmonary valve opens to allow blood to travel from the right ventricle into the pulmonary artery. This artery brings blood to your lungs for oxygen.

At the same time, the aortic valve opens to allow blood to flow from the left ventricle into the aorta, which brings oxygen-rich blood to the body. As the cycle finishes, the ventricles relax and the pulmonary and aortic valves shut tightly. These valves prevent blood from flowing back into the ventricles.

## Arm yourself with knowledge.

Heart failure is a chronic condition that prevents the heart from being able to pump enough oxygenated blood to your body's cells. The heart simply can't keep up with the body's demands for oxygen. To compensate for this, the heart's chambers enlarge, the heart's muscle mass increases, and the heart may start to pump faster. Blood vessels also narrow to keep blood pressure up, and the body naturally directs blood away from less important tissues and organs and to the heart and brain.

These measures for compensating may work for a little bit, but they just mask heart failure temporarily. Eventually, they will no longer be effective and you will start to experience fatigue, breathing problems or other symptoms. For this reason, it is important to know the warning signs of heart failure so you can get evaluation and treatment from your doctor as early as possible.

## Types of heart failure.

There are two main types of heart failure: left-sided heart failure and right-sided heart failure. Left-sided heart failure is the most common. Additionally, congestive heart failure is a separate condition that can result from left-sided or right-sided heart failure.

### Left-sided heart failure

When the left side of the heart is in failure, it must work harder to pump the same amount of blood. There are two types of left-sided heart failure. In systolic failure, the left ventricle doesn't contract normally and the heart loses its ability to pump with enough force to propel blood to your body. In diastolic failure, the left ventricle can't relax properly because the muscle is too stiff and the heart can't fill with enough blood during the resting period between each beat.



### Right-sided Heart Failure

Often caused by left-sided heart failure, right-sided heart failure causes increased fluid pressure that circulates back to the lungs, which damages the heart's right side. This can allow blood to back up in the body's veins, causing swelling in the legs, ankles or abdomen.

### Congestive Heart Failure

Congestive heart failure is the end result of the body not being able to manage the pressure or volume in the heart or lungs. This results in fluid building up in the lungs.

## Who is at risk for heart failure?

Most of the time, heart failure occurs in people who currently have or have had a heart condition. Coronary artery disease, high blood pressure and a previous heart attack are the most common conditions that can lead to heart failure over time.

Because heart failure affects so many Americans, it is safe to say that everyone is at risk.

# Getting ahead of your diagnosis.

The first effects of heart failure can go unnoticed because in the early stages of the condition, your body can compensate for it by making the heart work harder. Eventually, however, heart failure progresses to the point at which you will feel symptoms. If you have any of these warning signs, it is important to discuss them with your doctor so he or she can determine if you need further testing and treatment.

## **SHORTNESS OF BREATH**

The inability to breathe normally or deeply, without chest discomfort.

## **CHRONIC COUGHING OR WHEEZING**

Coughing that produces white or pink blood-tinged mucus.

## **BUILD-UP OF FLUID**

Swelling in the feet, ankles, legs or abdomen, or weight gain.

## **DIZZINESS**

Feeling dizzy or lightheaded, or fainting.

## **FATIGUE OR WEAKNESS**

An overwhelming sustained exhaustion and decreased physical and mental ability.

## **NAUSEA OR LACK OF APPETITE**

A feeling of being full or sick to your stomach.

## **CONFUSION OR IMPAIRED THINKING**

Memory loss, forgetfulness and feelings of disorientation.

## **FAST HEART RATE**

A feeling that your heart is racing or throbbing (palpitations).





## How your doctor diagnoses heart failure.

If you have any of the signs of heart failure, your doctor might order some tests or procedures to diagnose any problems with your heart's function. Tests often focus on examining your heart's ventricles (lower chambers) for their ability to pump enough blood to the body, or relax and fill with the right amount of blood.

If you have heart failure, your doctor will determine what type and class of heart failure that you have. These factors all influence the best treatment and medication options for you.

# We'll help you live your best life.

Treating heart failure involves managing its symptoms because it is a condition that can't be cured even though the effects can sometimes be reversed. Treatment often involves active participation between you and your doctor to find the right combination of lifestyle factors, medications, procedures and treatments that can help improve your quality of life. Your doctor may recommend these routines as a part of your treatment plan:

## Lifestyle Factors

Lifestyle factors are very important to managing your heart failure. Take an active role with your doctor to develop a plan that may include:

- Losing or maintaining your weight
- Tracking daily fluid intake
- Avoiding alcohol and quitting smoking
- Avoiding or limiting caffeine
- Eating a low-sodium, low-fat diet
- Being physically active
- Managing stress
- Monitoring blood pressure
- Getting rest
- Developing social support
- Getting appropriate vaccinations (like flu or pneumonia)
- Avoiding tight socks or stockings

## Cardiac Rehab

This medically supervised program often includes exercise training, education on heart-healthy living and lifestyle, and counseling to help reduce stress. The goal of cardiac rehab is to stabilize, slow or even reverse the progression of heart failure. Talk to your doctor to see if cardiac rehab is a good treatment option for you.

## Medications

Your doctor may recommend certain medications to help improve your quality of life. The right medications may help you to feel more energetic and be more physically active.

- **Angiotensin Converting Enzyme (ACE) Inhibitor:** Lowers blood pressure and decreases the heart's workload.
- **Angiotensin Receptor Blocker (ARB):** Lowers blood pressure.
- **Diuretic:** Helps your body get rid of extra water and sodium.
- **Angiotensin-Receptor Neprilysin Inhibitor (ARNI):** Improves artery opening and blood flow, reduces sodium (salt) retention, and decreases strain on the heart.
- **Beta-Blocker:** Lowers blood pressure and slows heart rate.
- **Digoxin:** Helps your heart pump better.
- **Vasodilator:** Lowers blood pressure by relaxing blood vessels and allowing them to open (dilate).





## Devices and Surgical Procedures

Some people living with heart failure may qualify for surgical procedures and devices that could help improve their heart function. These treatments can include:

### **IMPLANTABLE CARDIOVERTER-DEFIBRILLATOR (ICD)**

Defibrillators can help people who have serious arrhythmias (irregular heartbeats). These devices are surgically placed to keep the heart on pace when a life-threatening abnormal heart rhythm is detected.

### **CARDIAC RESYNCHRONIZATION THERAPY (CRT)**

CRT involves placing a special pacemaker to help control the heart's contractions. This can be recommended if the heart's electrical signals are off, which changes how the heart normally beats.

### **LEFT VENTRICULAR ASSIST DEVICE (LVAD)**

A LVAD is sometimes recommended for those waiting on a heart transplant. It is a surgically implantable, portable device that can be a temporary way to help weakened ventricles by providing a mechanism that keeps the heart pumping.

### **HEART TRANSPLANTATION**

For some with severe, progressive heart failure that can't be helped with medications and lifestyle changes, a heart transplant might be the only option. This involves replacing a diseased heart with a healthy, donated heart through open heart surgery.

## Ongoing Medical Care

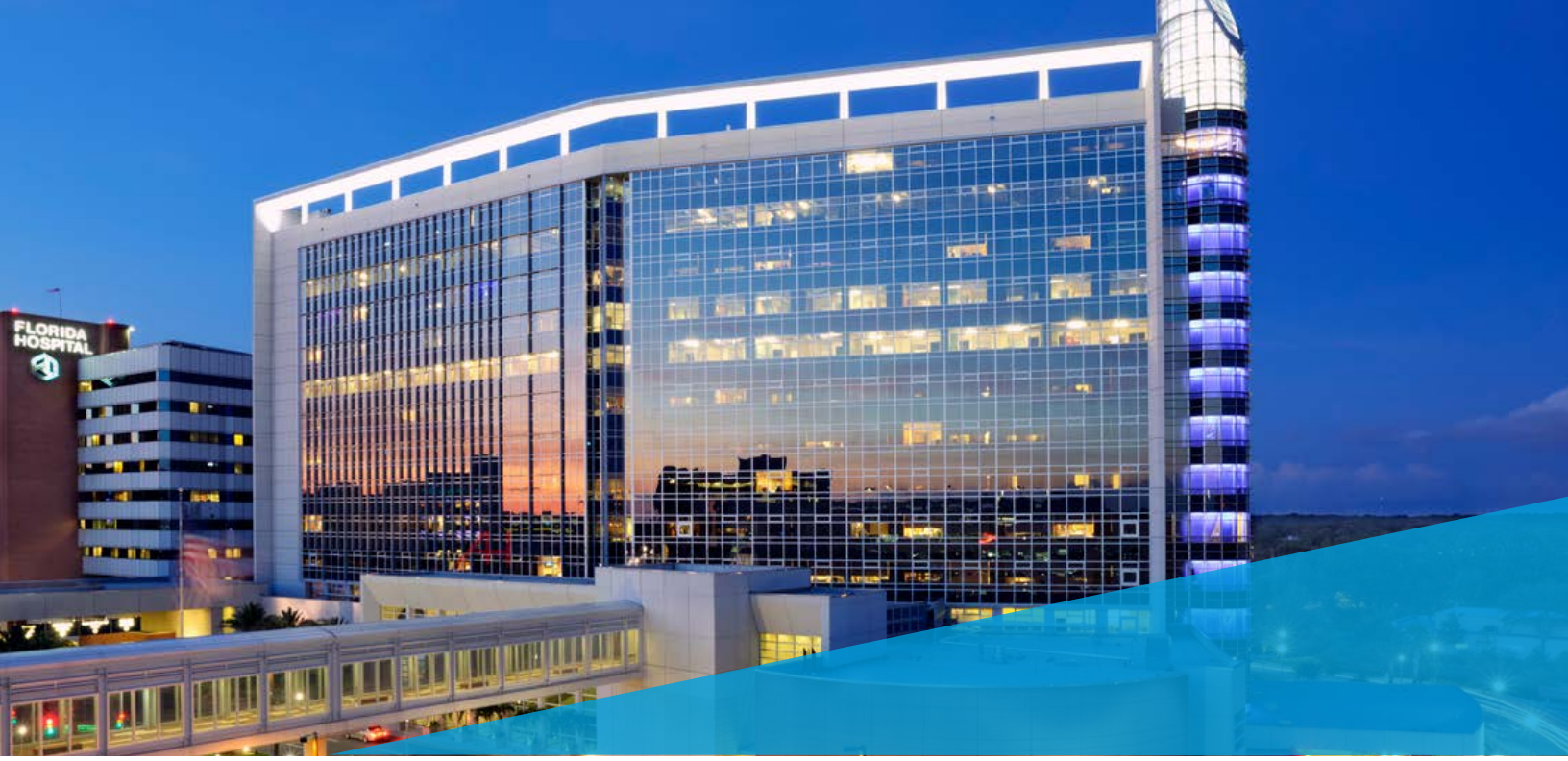
It is important to actively monitor your symptoms and see your doctor if you feel any changes in your health. Your doctor might need to adjust your treatment plan.

Contact your doctor right away if you experience any of the following symptoms:

- Gaining more than three pounds in a day or so
- Swelling in your feet, ankles or other parts of your body
- Difficulty breathing
- Changes in physical abilities
- Flu
- Fever
- Chest pain
- Coughing up mucus
- Confusion, dizziness or lightheadedness
- Decreased appetite

Many people live long, fulfilling lives with heart failure. While it brings lifestyle changes, many embrace these changes to build healthier habits that make them feel better, like eating well, exercising and tracking and managing symptoms. Building a support system around you of family, friends and your health care team is important for helping you make these changes, and for living the most healthful life possible with heart failure.





## We're designed to help patients like you.

Detecting and treating heart failure is a priority at the AdventHealth Cardiovascular Institute. As a chosen partner of the American Heart Association in Central Florida, our over 160 board-certified cardiologists and cardiovascular surgeons perform leading-edge cardiovascular and thoracic services to help our patients manage heart failure with the best possible outcomes.

AdventHealth has been an established local leader in the fight against heart disease since 1967 and addresses every facet of heart-health care through our Centers of Excellence in valve surgery, arrhythmia and ablation, vascular surgery, as well as our heart transplant and VAD programs.

Serving more than 72,000 patients each year, including approximately 4,650 who undergo heart surgery, our centers are supported by a

team of more than 1,000 specially trained nurses and technicians. Our specialists work together to deliver truly comprehensive medicine, from prevention and diagnosis to the latest advancements in heart failure treatment and management.

### Take charge of your cardiovascular care.

**For more information or for a physician referral, call our cardiac care coordinator at 877-659-9433.**

*This guide is provided to the general public to disseminate health-related information. The information is not intended to be used for diagnosing or prescribing. Please consult your physician before undertaking any form of medical treatment and/or adopting any exercise program or dietary guidelines.*

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