

SUPRA HOME HEALTH, INC.

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CONGESTIVE HEART FAILURE (CHF)

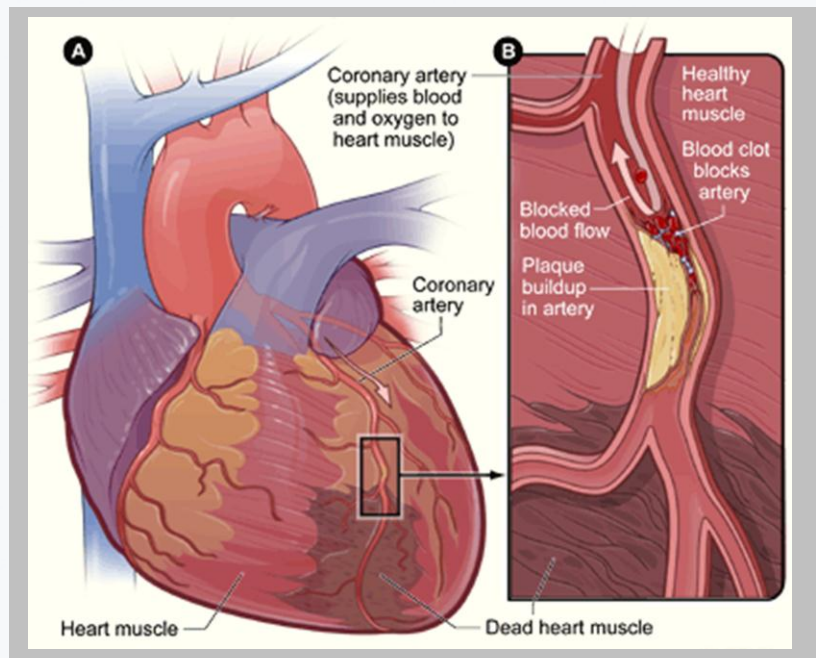
WHAT IS CHF?

Congestive heart failure (CHF) is a condition in which the heart can no longer pump enough blood to the rest of the body.

Heart failure is a chronic, long-term condition, although it can sometimes develop suddenly. The condition may affect only the right side or only the left side of the heart. These are called right-sided heart failure or left-sided heart failure. More often, both sides of the heart are involved. Heart failure is present when the following changes are present:

- Your heart muscle cannot pump, or eject, the blood out of the heart very well. This is called systolic heart failure.
- Your heart muscles are stiff and do not fill up with blood easily. This is called diastolic heart failure.

Both of these problems mean the heart is no longer able to pump enough oxygen-rich blood out to the rest of your body, especially when you exercise or are active.



As the heart's pumping action is lost, blood may back up in other areas of the body, causing fluid to build up in the lungs, the liver, the gastrointestinal tract, and the arms and legs. As a result, there is a lack of oxygen and nutrition to organs, which damages them and reduces their ability to work properly.

Perhaps the most common cause of heart failure is coronary artery disease (CAD), a narrowing of the small blood vessels that supply blood and oxygen to the heart. For information on this condition and its risk factors, see: Coronary artery disease.

Heart failure can also occur when an infection weakens the heart muscle. Such a disorder is called cardiomyopathy. There are many different types. For more information, see: Cardiomyopathy

Other heart problems that may cause heart failure are:

- Congenital heart disease
- Heart attack
- Heart valve disease
- Some types of abnormal heart rhythms (arrhythmias)

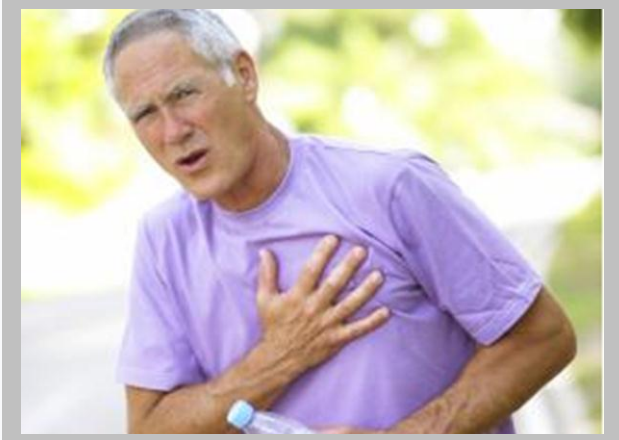
Diseases such as emphysema, severe anemia, hyperthyroidism, or hypothyroidism may also cause or contribute to heart failure.

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SIGNS & SYMPTOMS OF CHF?

Symptoms may begin suddenly or slowly over time.

- Shortness of breath with activity, or after lying down for a while
- Cough
- Swelling of feet and ankles
- Swelling of the abdomen
- Weight gain
- Irregular or rapid pulse
- Sensation of feeling the heart beat (palpitations)
- Difficulty sleeping
- Fatigue, weakness, faintness
- Loss of appetite, indigestion

Other symptoms may include:

- Decreased alertness or concentration
- Decreased urine production
- Nausea and vomiting
- Need to urinate at night

Infants may sweat during feeding (or other activity).

Some patients with heart failure have no symptoms. In these people, the symptoms may develop only with these conditions:

- Abnormal heart rhythm (arrhythmias)
- Anemia
- Hyperthyroidism
- Infections with high fever
- Kidney disease

HOW IS CHF TREATED?

Your doctor is the best person to make the diagnosis. The most common signs of congestive heart failure are swollen legs or ankles or difficulty breathing. Another symptom is weight gain when fluid builds up.

CHF usually requires a treatment program of

- rest
- proper diet
- modified daily activities
- drugs such as
 - ACE (angiotensin-converting enzyme) inhibitors
 - beta blockers
 - digitalis
 - diuretics
 - vasodilators

Various drugs are used to treat congestive heart failure. They perform different functions. ACE inhibitors and vasodilators expand blood vessels and decrease resistance. This allows blood to flow more easily and makes the heart's work easier or more efficient. Beta blockers can improve how well the heart's left lower chamber (left ventricle) pumps. Digitalis increases the pumping action of the heart, while diuretics help the body eliminate excess salt and water.

When a specific cause of congestive heart failure is discovered, it should be treated or, if possible, corrected. For example, some cases of congestive heart failure can be treated by treating high blood pressure. If the heart failure is caused by an abnormal heart valve, the valve can be surgically replaced.

If the heart becomes so damaged that it can't be repaired, a more drastic approach should be considered. A heart transplant could be an option.

Most people with mild and moderate congestive heart failure can be treated. Proper medical supervision can prevent them from becoming invalids.