

# THINGS PEOPLE SHOULD KNOW ABOUT HEART FAILURE

In the Clinic  
Annals of Internal Medicine

- Heart failure, sometimes called congestive heart failure, is a condition in which the heart can't pump as well as it should. Because the heart has a hard time getting blood to the rest of the body, patients with heart failure can feel weak and tired.
- In some patients with heart failure, fluid (edema) builds up in the lungs and parts of the body, making it hard to breathe and causing swelling in the legs.

## *Heart Failure Symptoms:*

Breathlessness during activity, at rest, or while sleeping

Wheezing or coughing that may be dry or may produce white or pink blood-tinged phlegm

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

A constant lack of energy and difficulty performing everyday activities

A sense of having a full or sick stomach

A feeling like the heart is racing or pounding

A feeling the heart is skipping beats or occasionally pounding very hard

- Heart failure can result from many different conditions that directly or indirectly affect the heart. People with high blood pressure, diabetes, high cholesterol, and coronary artery disease can develop heart failure. Treating these conditions may prevent heart failure.
- Treating heart failure means working together with your doctor to control salt in your diet, watching your weight, and taking all your medications every day. It's important to keep your regular doctor appointments.
- Heart failure affects nearly 5 million adults, and 550 000 new cases are diagnosed each year. It is more common in older people but can occur at any age. Although there is no cure yet, heart failure is very treatable and millions of Americans lead a full life by managing their condition through medications and by making healthy changes in their lifestyles.

## Web Sites with Good Information on Heart Failure

### American College of Physicians

[www.doctorsforadults.com/images/healthpdfs/heartfail.pdf](http://www.doctorsforadults.com/images/healthpdfs/heartfail.pdf)

### American Heart Association

[www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=1486](http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=1486)

### National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute

[www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/dci/Diseases/Hf/HF\\_WhatIs.html](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/dci/Diseases/Hf/HF_WhatIs.html)