

Take Me to Buffalo General



UNDERSTANDING HEART FAILURE

Heart Failure Fast Facts

- Heart failure is among the most common cardiovascular diseases. In fact, 5 million Americans have it, and more than 500,000 are newly diagnosed each year.
- Heart failure is the most common reason that people over 65 years of age go to the hospital.
- It can take years for heart failure to develop, so if you are at risk – make lifestyle changes now to prevent it.

What is Heart Failure?

A condition that occurs when the heart loses its pumping or squeezing power. As a result, the blood backs up into the lungs and other body parts, making it harder to do things that were easy for you to do in the past (i.e. walking, carrying groceries, climbing stairs, etc.)

What Causes Heart Failure?

- The heart muscle becomes weak as a result of damage from a heart attack, an infection, excessive alcohol intake, or the cause may be unknown.
- High blood pressure (causes the heart to work harder to pump blood out to the rest of the body).

- Problems with the heart valves
- Irregular heart beat
- Diabetes
- Obesity / Overweight
- Smoking
- Alcohol

What Are The Signs and Symptoms of Heart Failure?

- Shortness of breath, particularly with activity or lying flat
- Swelling of feet or legs (can go up to the waist or “belly” area)
- Waking up at night coughing or feeling short-of-breath
- Feeling more tired or weaker than usual
- Sudden weight gain
- Loss of appetite and feeling full or bloated most of the time
- Dry, constant cough that may be worse at night

How is Heart Failure Treated?

- Making healthy food choices and eating a well-balanced diet
- Avoiding foods that contain large amounts of salt. *Take the salt shaker off table!*
- Taking medications prescribed by your doctor that allow your heart to pump blood more effectively
Your doctor may also prescribe a

water pill to get rid of extra fluids in your body.

- Balance activity and rest

If you have Heart Failure:

- Follow your doctor's advice
- Take your medications the way you should
- Weigh yourself every morning and write it down to find out if fluids (water) are building up. If you gain 3 pounds in a day or 5 pounds in a week, call your doctor.
- Call your doctor if your signs and symptoms become worse. **DO NOT DELAY.**
- Eat a healthful diet that is low in salt and saturated fats.
- Avoid alcohol
- If you smoke – **stop!**

For additional information, please contact:

The Kaleida Health Heart Failure Clinic
at: 716-859-7280

The American Heart Association,
1-800-AHA-USA1 (1-800-242-8721 or
www.americanheart.org