

Congestive Heart Failure

Chronic Heart Failure or Congestive Heart Failure (CHF or "heart failure") is a disorder in which the heart loses its ability to pump blood efficiently. The term "heart failure" should not be confused with cardiac arrest, when the heart actually stops beating. The most common causes of CHF are chronic cardiovascular diseases hypertension (high blood pressure) and coronary artery disease.

Symptoms

With heart failure, many organs don't receive enough oxygen and nutrients, which damages them and reduces their ability to function properly causing:

- Weakness
- Edema – swollen legs, ankles, feet
- Weight gain from swelling
- Shortness of breath

Statistics

- CHF is a common condition that affects more than 5 million people in the USA, with nearly a half a million new cases being diagnosed each year.
- 75-80% of these patients are more than 65 years old (in whom the likelihood of heart failure increases to 6-10%)
- It is also estimated that nearly 20 million people have unsuspected heart failure, and are likely to develop symptoms in the next 1 -5 years.
- Heart failure is responsible for more than 11 million visits to a physician's office and results in 3.5 million hospitalizations per year.
- Each year, approximately a quarter of a million people die from heart failure.
- The number of deaths from heart failure, either as a primary or secondary cause has increased 6-fold over the last 40 years.

Management

CHF usually requires a treatment program of:

- Rest
- Proper diet
- Modified daily activities
- Medications such as
 - ACE (angiotensin-converting enzyme) inhibitors
 - beta blockers
 - digitalis
 - diuretics
 - vasodilators
- Oxygen Therapy