



CARE OF THE HEART

A SPECIAL NEWSLETTER FOR MVP MEMBERS

ISSUE 1, 2016

HEART FAILURE SYMPTOMS

If you have heart failure, symptoms start to happen when your heart cannot pump e

Shortness of Breath

While shortness of breath is the most common symptom of heart failure, it may be difficult or impossible to distinguish it from shortness of breath caused by other health problems such as emphysema or severe anemia. Your doctor can help you determine why you have been feeling short of breath.

People with heart failure experience shortness of breath in many different ways. You might feel that:

- You can't catch your breath.

- You feel tightness in your chest.
- You feel tired when you walk.
- You need to stop a lot when you walk.
- It gets worse when you lie flat, and it may wake you up at night.

Being Very Tired (Fatigue)

You might feel that:

- You have less energy and feel more tired than usual.
- You can't exert yourself like you could before.

You might also have low exercise capacity. This can be harder to describe. It is a symptom



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enough blood to the rest of your body.

that people with heart failure often don't even notice because they have gradually reduced the level at which they exert themselves.

Swelling In Ankles or Feet

People with heart failure often experience swelling in their ankles or feet. You might notice that:

- It gets worse at the end of the day or after you stand for long periods.
- It hurts.
- Pressure leaves impressions in your skin.
- Shoes no longer fit.

The degree of swelling you experience depends on how well your body is compensating for heart failure and how much sodium and water your body retains. In some cases the swelling is mild and merely bothersome, while in other cases it can be severe and painful if the skin becomes taut and sensitive.

Urinating More Often

In the earlier stages of heart failure, some people need to urinate more frequently during the night than during the day. This happens because during the day, fluid and blood can pool in your legs while you are standing, resulting in less blood in the circulation and, as a result, less blood flow to the kidneys.

Sudden Weight Gain

Weight gain may be the first noticeable sign that you have developed heart failure or that your heart failure is getting worse. The amount of weight gained varies greatly among people with heart failure, and it reflects the amount of sodium and water the body has retained.

A sudden weight gain may mean that excess fluid is building up in your body because your heart failure is getting worse. It is a symptom of sudden heart failure.

HEART FAILURE STAGES

The American College of Cardiology and the American Heart Association have devised a classification system for heart failure. It categorizes heart failure based on how the disease progresses in most people. Under this system, heart failure is classified by stages A through D¹.

Stage A: Person is at high risk for developing heart failure. But there is no structural disorder of the heart.

Examples: Person has high blood pressure, coronary artery disease, diabetes, a history of drug or alcohol abuse, a personal history of rheumatic fever, or a family history of cardiomyopathy.

Stage B: Person has a structural disorder of the heart. But the person has never had symptoms of heart failure.

Examples: Person has structural changes to the left ventricle, has heart valve disease, or has had a heart attack.

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MVP Health Care offers a condition health management program for members living with heart failure. For more information or to see if you qualify, call **1-866-942-7966**. MVP Health Care, as part of its continuing Quality Improvement Program, endorses The Institute for Clinical Systems Improvement Heart Failure in Adults guidelines.

Information in this newsletter does not constitute medical advice. If you have questions about your health, talk to your doctor.

Health benefit plans are issued or administered by MVP Health Plan, Inc.; MVP Health Insurance Company; MVP Health Insurance Company of New Hampshire, Inc.; MVP Select Care, Inc.; and MVP Health Services Corp., operating subsidiaries of MVP Health Care, Inc. Not all plans available in all states and counties.

Contact Us

For more information, call **1-866-942-7966**
Monday-Friday, 8:30 am-5:00 pm.

TTY: **1-800-662-1220**

WE VALUE YOUR OPINION

Please fill out a brief, anonymous survey at **www.mvplistens.com**. We will use this information to create a better experience for all of our members. All responses are 100 percent confidential. The survey only takes a few minutes to complete.

Stage C: Person has past or current symptoms of heart failure. Symptoms are linked with underlying structural heart disease.

Examples: Person has shortness of breath or fatigue caused by structural heart disease. Or the person does not have symptoms and is getting treatment for prior symptoms of heart failure.

Stage D: Person has end-stage disease. He or she needs specialized treatment strategies.

Examples: Person is often hospitalized for heart failure or cannot be safely discharged from the hospital. Or the person is in the hospital waiting for a heart transplant. Or the person is at home getting continuous intravenous support for symptom relief or being supported with a mechanical circulatory assistive device. Or the person is in a hospice setting for the management of heart failure.

¹Yancy CW, et al. (2013). 2013 ACCF/AHA Guideline for the management of heart failure: A report of the American College of Cardiology Foundation/American Heart Association Task Force on Practice Guidelines. *Journal of the American College of Cardiology*, 62(16): e147–e239.

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QUICK TIPS FOR BEING PREPARED TO TALK TO YOUR DOCTOR

Patients who have good relationships with their doctors are more satisfied with their care and have better results. Here are some tips to help you and your doctor become better partners in improving your health care:

- Write down your questions before your visit. List the most important ones first to make sure they get asked and answered.
- Bring a “health history” list with you, and keep it up to date.
- Always bring any medications you are taking, including over-the-counter, or a list of those medications (include when and how often you take them) and what strength.
- You might want to bring someone along to help you ask questions and remember the answers.
- Find more information and printable forms at www.mvphealthcare.com.

Source: Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ)



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