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## WHAT IS HEART FAILURE?

Heart failure is a condition in which the heart can't pump blood the way it should. In some cases, the heart can't fill with enough blood. In other cases, the heart can't send blood to the rest of the body with enough force. Some people have both problems.

Heart failure develops over time as the pumping of the heart grows weaker. It can affect the right side of the heart only or both the left and right sides of the heart. Most cases involve both sides of the heart.

Right-side heart failure occurs when the heart can't pump blood to the lungs, where it picks up oxygen. Left-side heart failure occurs when the heart can't pump enough oxygen-rich blood to the rest of the body.

Right-side heart failure may cause fluid to build up in the feet, ankles, legs, liver, abdomen, and, rarely, the veins in the neck. Right-side and left-side heart failure also cause shortness of breath and fatigue (tiredness).

The leading causes of heart failure are diseases that damage the heart. These include coronary artery disease (CAD), high blood pressure, and diabetes. Heart failure is a very common condition. About 5 million people in the United States have heart failure, and it results in about 300,000 deaths each year.

Both children and adults can have heart failure, although the symptoms and treatments differ. This article focuses on heart failure in adults.

Taking steps to prevent CAD can help prevent heart failure. These steps include following a heart healthy diet, not smoking, doing physical activity, and losing weight if you're overweight or obese. Working with your doctor to control high blood pressure and diabetes also can help prevent heart failure.

People who have heart failure can live longer and more active lives if it's diagnosed early and they follow their treatment plans. For most, treatment includes medicines and lifestyle measures.

Currently, there's no cure for heart failure. However, researchers are finding and testing new treatments. These treatments offer hope for better ways to delay heart failure and its complications.

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Articles in this publication are compiled from information from: [http://www.nlm.nih.gov/health/med/Diseases/HFHF\\_WhatIs.html](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/health/med/Diseases/HFHF_WhatIs.html)  
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## WHAT IS CORONARY ARTERY DISEASE?

Coronary artery disease (CAD) is a condition in which plaque builds up inside the coronary arteries. These arteries supply your heart muscle with oxygen-rich blood.

Plaque is made up of fat, cholesterol, calcium, and other substances found in the blood. When plaque builds up in the arteries, the condition is called atherosclerosis.

When your coronary arteries are narrowed or blocked, oxygen-rich blood can't reach your heart muscle. This can cause angina or a heart attack. Angina is chest pain or discomfort that occurs when not enough oxygen-rich blood is flowing to an area of your heart muscle. Angina may feel like pressure or squeezing in your chest. The pain also may occur in your shoulders, arms, neck, jaw, or back.

A heart attack occurs when blood flow to an area of your heart muscle is completely blocked. This prevents oxygen-rich blood from reaching that area of heart muscle and causes it to die. Without quick treatment, a heart attack can lead to serious problems and even death.

Over time, CAD can weaken the heart muscle and lead to heart failure and arrhythmias. Heart failure is a condition in which your heart can't pump enough blood throughout your body. Arrhythmias are problems with the speed or rhythm of your heartbeat.

CAD is the most common type of heart disease. It's the leading cause of death in the United States for both men and women. Lifestyle changes, medicines, and/or medical procedures can effectively prevent or treat CAD in most people.

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