

The types of drugs include:

- Diuretics** : To remove excess fluid and salt from the body
- ACE inhibitors** : To dilate arteries & lower blood pressure
- Beta blockers** : To slow the heart rate and lower blood pressure
- Digoxin** : To strengthen the heart and slow the heartbeat

Surgery:

Surgery is the other treatment option for Heart Failure. The procedures include:

1. **Coronary artery bypass grafting (CABG):** A procedure that bypasses blocked arteries.
2. **Coronary angioplasty:** A balloon is inflated in the narrowed blood vessels to open blocked arteries so that they are able to deliver oxygen and nutrients to the heart muscle.
3. **Valve repair or replacement:** If heart valves are at fault, they may need to be repaired or replaced to make heart work better.
4. **Dor's procedure:** Sometimes after heart attack, heart size increases changing its shape and making it less effective. That time its size need to be reduced by this surgery to bring back heart to normal size and shape.
5. **Heart Pumps:** These mechanical devices, called left ventricular assist devices (LVADs), are implanted into the abdomen and attached to a weakened heart to help it pump blood throughout the body. Implanted heart pumps can significantly extend and improve the lives of some people with end-stage Heart Failure who are waiting for a new heart or who aren't qualified for a heart transplant.

6. **Pacemakers & ICDs:** Implanted devices can control arrhythmias (abnormal heart rhythms) that may result from Heart Failure. Devices include pacemakers to treat a too-slow heart rate and implantable cardioverter defibrillators (ICDs) to stop a too-rapid heart rate that could be life threatening. Sometimes a biventricular pacemaker is combined with an ICD for people with severe Heart Failure.
7. **Heart transplant:** When the heart is badly damaged, heart transplant may be the only option. Not all patients are suitable for a heart transplant, and even if they are, getting a suitable donor heart from a brain-dead person is a big problem.
8. **Stem cells treatment:** Injecting stem cells from bone marrow into the heart to develop new heart muscle cells, appears to be a promising technique at present.

(Published in public interest by Heart Failure Society. Information in the brochure is not a substitute for consultation with a Cardiologist. Should you need any clarification or contact information, visit website www.hfsindia.org)



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What is Heart Failure ?

Heart Failure, also known as Congestive Heart Failure, is a condition in which the heart can't pump enough blood throughout the body. The word 'failure' is misleading in that it implies that heart has stopped and is no longer working. But in medical jargon, Heart Failure simply means the heart is not working as efficiently as it should be.

Heart Failure does not develop overnight - it is a progressive disease that starts slowly and gets worse over time. When the heart's muscle becomes weakened after it is injured by a heart attack or high blood pressure, it gradually loses its ability to pump enough blood to meet the body's needs.

Although Heart Failure cannot be completely cured, it can be effectively managed and the patient can be helped to lead a better quality of life.

What causes Heart Failure ?

The most common causes of Heart Failure are:

- Coronary artery disease (narrowing and blockade of the blood vessels to the heart)
- Problems with the heart muscle (cardiomyopathy)
- High blood pressure (increases the workload on the heart)
- Problems with any of the heart valves (lead to increased workload and stress on heart)
- Abnormal heart rhythms (arrhythmias)
- Toxic substances (such as alcohol abuse)
- Congenital heart disease (a heart problem one is born with)
- Diabetes
- Thyroid problems

What are the Symptoms ?

- Shortness of breath with activity, or after lying down for a while
- Swelling of the feet and ankles
- Extreme fatigue and weakness
- Difficulty sleeping at night due to breathing problems
- Chronic cough with sputum
- Swollen or tender abdomen
- Loss of appetite, indigestion, nausea and vomiting
- Pronounced neck veins
- Increased urination at night
- Rapid weight gain
- Palpitations, irregular or rapid pulse
- Decreased alertness or concentration, impaired memory

How is CHF diagnosed ?

Apart from the medical history and clinical examination, the doctor may advise following tests to diagnose Heart Failure:

- Electrocardiograph (also called EKG or ECG)
- Chest X-ray
- Echocardiograph (ultrasound scan of the heart)
- Exercise testing (to see how the heart performs under stress)
- MRI (imaging technique)
- Coronary angiography
- Radionuclide Heart Scan
- Heart catheterization
- Blood tests
- Urine tests

What is the treatment ?

Heart Failure cannot be cured. But it can be successfully managed. Doctors prescribe a three-pronged approach involving:

- Lifestyle changes
- Medications
- Surgery

Lifestyle Changes:

Patients with mild to moderate Heart Failure can slow the progression of the disease and lead a better quality of life by making certain lifestyle changes. One has to:

- Quit smoking
- Lose weight
- Avoid or limit alcohol and caffeine
- Cut down on salt
- Eat more fiber and less fats
- Exercise regularly as per doctor's advice
- Reduce stress
- Keep feet elevated to decrease swelling
- Get enough rest

Medications:

The doctor may prescribe various drugs to improve the heart's pumping action or dilate blood vessels or reduce the fluid and sodium in the body. These have to be taken regularly.

