



## DOCTOR DISCUSSION GUIDE

# Managing Heart Failure

Heart failure can result from many different kinds of heart disease, so it's important for you and your doctor to work together closely to optimize your medical treatment. Asking the right questions during your conversation will help you know what to expect and how to better navigate your condition. Familiarize yourself with these common terms before your appointment to help facilitate your discussion.

## Vocabulary to Know

Your doctor might mention these common terms. Here's what they mean.

<b>Dyspnea</b>	The medical name for shortness of breath. In people with heart failure, dyspnea is most often caused when the lungs become congested with excess fluid. Dyspnea is usually the most prominent symptom experienced by a person with heart failure.
<b>Peripheral Edema</b>	Swelling of the feet, ankles, and legs. Worsening peripheral edema suggests that heart failure may also be worsening, and that treatment adjustments may be needed.
<b>Pulmonary Edema</b>	A condition characterized by severe dyspnea, coughing, and, often, frothing at the mouth, and is a medical emergency. It is caused by excess fluid in the air sacs of the lungs. In people with heart failure, pulmonary edema usually indicates that pressures within the heart are excessively high.
<b>Congestive Heart Failure</b>	The term used when pulmonary congestion is the most prominent symptom of heart failure.
<b>Dilated Cardiomyopathy</b>	A condition in which the heart muscle becomes weakened, and in response the heart dilates. Dilated cardiomyopathy is the most common cause of heart failure.
<b>Low-Output Heart Failure</b>	The inability of the heart to pump sufficient blood out to the tissues, which produces severe weakness and fatigue.
<b>Diastolic Dysfunction</b>	Refers to relatively "stiff" heart muscle, which makes it difficult for the heart to fill with blood in between heartbeats. Severe diastolic dysfunction can lead to diastolic heart failure, where the poor cardiac filling leads to elevated cardiac pressures, and subsequently to pulmonary congestion.
<b>Ventricular Hypertrophy</b>	Refers to an abnormal thickening of the heart muscle in the left and/or right ventricle. Hypertrophy is one cause of diastolic dysfunction.
<b>Ejection Fraction (EF)</b>	The left ventricular ejection fraction is the proportion of blood within the left ventricle that is ejected with each heartbeat. A normal ejection fraction is greater than 0.4. A depressed ejection fraction indicates that the heart muscle has weakened, and the heart has begun to dilate in response.





**About Treatment**

- You have me on several medications. Should I take them all at once or space them out?
- What side effects do you want me to watch out for?
- What should I do if I forget to take a dose of one of my medicines?
- Am I a candidate for a pacemaker, implantable defibrillator, or cardiac resynchronization device?
- Is there a type of surgery or invasive procedure that might improve my condition?

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**About Coping and Living With Heart Failure**

- How often and what time of day should I weigh myself to monitor for excess fluid accumulation?
- What degree of change in my weight should I notify you about?
- What limitations do I have on my activities?
- Should I keep a daily journal to tabulate my symptoms and my weight, to help detect long-term trends that might be important?
- Should I have a home blood pressure device, and how often should I use it?
- Will you talk to my loved ones about helping me stick to a good diet and a good activity level, and about what to watch out for?

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