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Tracking Symptoms of Heart Failure

If you have heart failure (HF), becoming aware of even small changes in your body can help you manage your condition. Here are common symptoms of heart failure:

- **Fluid retention.** You may notice swelling in the lower half of your body, especially the feet and ankles. Sometimes your shoes may not fit. This can lead to sudden weight gain.
- **Weight gain.** Weigh yourself every morning after waking and urinating. Tell your healthcare provider if you suddenly gain 2 or more pounds in 1 day, or more than 5 pounds in 1 week, or whatever weight gain you were told to report by your healthcare provider.
- **Belly (abdominal) swelling or stomach pain.** You may notice your pants fit tight or that you have to adjust the fit of your belt.
- **Shortness of breath or coughing.** Your heart can't pump as well as it should, so fluid can back up into your lungs. You may be breathless, which can cause you to wake up at night. You may also feel short of breath doing tasks that you previously had no problems with. These might be checking the mail or walking up one flight of stairs. If you develop a cough, what you cough up may be foamy or frothy. Let your healthcare provider know if this happens.
- **Trouble sleeping.** If you find yourself needing to use more pillows, or sleep in a chair rather than a bed to avoid trouble breathing, let your healthcare provider know right away.
- **Tiredness (fatigue).** Blood flow to the muscles may be reduced. This may make you feel tired during the day. Take time to rest and talk with your healthcare provider.
- **Nausea or loss of appetite.** Not enough blood in your digestive system can make you feel full more quickly than usual or even sick to your stomach. Tell your healthcare provider.
- **Disorientation, memory loss, or confusion.** Changes in the amount of sodium in your blood can cause confusion. If you or someone else notices this, talk with your healthcare provider urgently or call 911.
- **Increased heart rate or fluttering heartbeats (palpitations).** You may feel like your heart is racing or throbbing. To make up for the loss of pumping capacity, your heart beats faster. Tell your healthcare provider if you notice these.

Monitoring symptoms

Watching how your symptoms change helps you keep heart failure under control. Take action as soon as you notice a symptom getting worse. This helps prevent a problem from becoming serious. You may even be able to stay out of the hospital.

You may use a diary or a calendar to track your symptoms and weight. You can also review the diary with your healthcare provider, or if you need to call and discuss your status over the phone. The Heart Failure Society of America has a mobile and Internet-based [application](#) that can help you log and track your symptoms, vital signs, and import activity from health trackers.

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