



BACKGROUND: Heart failure is a progressive condition in which the heart's muscle gets injured from a heart attack or even high blood pressure. It gradually loses the ability to pump enough blood to supply the body's needs. The heart can either become weak and unable to pump blood (systolic heart failure) or become stiff and unable to fill with blood adequately (diastolic heart failure). Both conditions lead to retention of extra fluid or congestion. Congestive heart failure is considered when symptoms start to develop. Many people don't even know they have it because symptoms are often mistaken for signs of getting older. Nearly 6.5 million Americans over the age of 20 have heart failure. Heart failure accounts for about 8.5% of all heart disease deaths in the United States. And, by some estimates heart failure contributes to about 36% of all cardiovascular disease deaths.

(Source: <https://hfsa.org/patient-hub/learn-about-heart-failure>)

SYMPTOMS AND DIAGNOSIS: Symptoms of heart failure may be subtle and often mistaken for normal signs of aging. Some of the most common symptoms of heart failure are due to extra fluid, or congestion. The congestion typically starts in the lungs, then moves to different parts of the body. In advanced stages, the cardiac output decreases. These three stages of symptoms can come sequentially or together. Some breathing symptoms are shortness of breath from walking stairs or simple activities, trouble breathing when resting or lying down, needing more than two pillows to sleep, frequent coughing, or a dry, hacking cough when lying flat in bed. Medical providers will order an echocardiogram to determine the strength of the heart. This ultrasound will measure the ejection fraction (EF), wall thickness, and flow of blood through valves in your heart. Medical therapy including pills and devices depend on your stage of heart failure and your functional state. With careful supervision, medical therapy, exercise, and diet and fluid restriction, many patients can enjoy their everyday activities and have a more normal life expectancy.

(Source: <https://hfsa.org/patient-hub/learn-about-heart-failure>)

COMMON MEDICATION SHOWS PROMISE: Researchers from the University of Glasgow found the diabetes drug, dapagliflozin, could be used as a treatment for patients with heart failure. Results showed the drug reduced patients' risk of worsening heart failure or cardiovascular death by more than a quarter. Dapagliflozin is one of a family of diabetes drugs known as SGLT2 inhibitors, which helps reduce blood glucose. It has been an effective treatment for diabetes and also reduces the risk of patients developing heart failure, which is a common complication of the condition. A trial involving more than 4,700 patients from 20 different countries compared the effectiveness of the drug with a placebo. About half the patients who took part did not have diabetes. Professor John McMurray, professor of cardiology at Glasgow University, said the results were "Remarkable. These are really once-in-a-lifetime findings that show a commonly prescribed drug for diabetes can effectively be used to treat people with heart failure."

(Source: <https://www.nursingtimes.net/news/research-and-innovation/breakthrough-study-shows-diabetes-drug-can-also-treat-heart-failure-03-09-2019/>)

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