

# CONGESTIVE HEART FAILURE

CONGESTIVE HEART FAILURE (CHF) OR HEART FAILURE IS A CONDITION IN WHICH THE HEART CANNOT PUMP ENOUGH BLOOD TO THE BODY'S OTHER ORGANS. THIS CAUSES A BUILDUP OF FLUID, CALLED CONGESTION, IN YOUR LUNGS AND OTHER BODY TISSUES.

CONGESTIVE HEART FAILURE USUALLY DEVELOPS SLOWLY. YEARS CAN GO BY WITHOUT ANY SYMPTOMS, HOWEVER, SYMPTOMS TEND TO WORSEN WITH TIME. THE SLOW ONSET AND PROGRESSION OF CHF IS CAUSED BY THE HEART'S EFFORTS TO DEAL WITH THE GRADUAL WEAKENING. YOUR HEART TRIES TO MAKE UP FOR THIS WEAKENING BY ENLARGING AND FORCING ITSELF TO PUMP FASTER TO MOVE MORE BLOOD THROUGH THE BODY.

CHF WAS ONCE AN ALMOST UNTREATABLE DISORDER, BUT TODAY THERE ARE MANY IMPORTANT AND EFFECTIVE MEASURES THAT HELP TO IMPROVE THE SYMPTOMS AND SURVIVAL OF CHF PATIENTS.

## **RISK FACTORS:**

- A) PREVIOUS HEART ATTACKS
- B) CORONARY ARTERY DISEASE (CAD)
- C) HYPERTENSION (HTN)
- D) IRREGULAR HEARTBEAT (ARRHYTHMIA)
- E) HEART VALVE DISEASE
- F) CARDIOMYOPATHY (DISEASE OF THE HEART MUSCLE)
- G) CONGENITAL HEART DEFECTS (DEFECTS YOU WERE BORN WITH)
- H) ALCOHOL AND DRUG ABUSE

I) ENDOCARDITIS AND/OR MYOCARDITIS (INFECTION OF THE HEART VALVES AND/OR HEART MUSCLE ITSELF)

SYMPTOMS CAN HELP DOCTORS FIND OUT WHICH SIDE OF YOUR HEART IS NOT WORKING PROPERLY.

**LEFT SIDED HEART FAILURE**

THE BLOOD AND AND FLUID BACK UP INTO YOUR LUNGS. YOU FEEL

SHORT OF BREATH, TIRED, AND HAVE A COUGH (ESPECIALLY AT NIGHT). IN SOME CASES, PATIENTS MAY BEGIN TO COUGH UP A PINK, FROTHY SPUTUM.

**RIGHT SIDED HEART FAILURE**

SLOW BLOOD FLOW CAUSES A BUILDUP OF FLUIDS IN YOUR VEINS.

YOUR FEET, LEGS, AND ANKLES BEGIN TO SWELL (EDEMA). THIS

EDEMA CAN SPREAD TO THE LUNGS, LIVER, AND STOMACH. YOU

MAY HAVE TO GO TO THE BATHROOM MORE FREQUENTLY, ESPECIALLY AT NIGHT. FLUID BUILDUP IS HARD ON YOUR KIDNEYS

AND AFFECTS THEIR ABILITY TO DISPOSE OF SALT (SODIUM)

WHICH CAN LEAD TO KIDNEY FAILURE. TREATMENT OF CHF

USUALLY CAUSES KIDNEY FUNCTION TO RETURN TO NORMAL.

## **SYMPTOMS AS CHF PROGRESSES:**

- A) SHORTNESS OF BREATH WHEN LYING FLAT
- B) A FEELING OF TIREDNESS/WEAKNESS AND YOU ARE UNABLE TO PERFORM PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES.
- C) WEIGHT GAIN FROM EXCESS FLUID
- D) CHEST PAIN
- E) LOSS OF APETITE
- F) INDIGESTION
- G) SWOLLEN NECK VEINS
- H) COLD AND CLAMMY SKIN
- I) FAST OR IRREGULAR HEARTBEAT
- J) RESTLESSNESS, CONFUSION, AND ATTENTION SPAN AND MEMORY ARE NOT AS GOOD AS THEY ONCE WERE

## **HOW IS CHF DIAGNOSED?**

MOST DOCTORS CAN MAKE A TENTATIVE DIAGNOSIS FROM THE PRESENCE OF EDEMA AND SHORTNESS OF BREATH.

- A) A DOCTOR CAN LISTEN WITH A STETHOSCOPE FOR CRACKLING SOUNDS OF FLUID IN LUNGS, THE DISTINCT SOUND OF FAULTY VALVES (HEART MURMUR), OR THE PRESENCE OF A VERY QUICK HEARTBEAT.
- B) A CHEST X-RAY CAN SHOW IF YOUR HEART IS ENLARGED AND IF YOU HAVE FLUID IN AND AROUND YOUR HEART.
- C) AN ECG/EKG CAN CHECK FOR AN IRREGULAR HEARTBEAT AND STRESS ON YOUR HEART. IT ALSO SHOWS IF YOU HAVE HAD A HEART ATTACK.
- D) AN ECHOCARDIOGRAM CAN BE USED TO SEE VALVE FUNCTION, HEART WALL MOTION, AND OVERALL HEART SIZE.

## **TREATMENT OF CHF:**

- A) REST
- B) PROPER DIET
- C) MODIFIED DAILY ACTIVITIES
- D) DRUGS SUCH AS
  - \* ACE (ANGIOTENSIN-CONVERTING ENZYME) INHIBITORS
  - \* BETA BLOCKERS
  - \* DIGITALIS
  - \* DIURETICS
  - \* VASODILATORS
- E) SURGERY
  - \* HEART VALVE REPAIR OR REPLACEMENT
  - \* PACEMAKER
  - \* CORRECTION OF CONGENITAL HEART DEFECTS
  - \* MECHANICAL ASSIST DEVICES
  - \* HEART TRANSPLANT

## **PREVENTION (LIFESTYLE CHANGES)**

- A) IF YOU SMOKE, QUIT.
- B) CONTROL HYPERTENSION, CHOLESTEREOL LEVELS, AND DIABETES.
- C) EAT A SENSIBLE DIET, LOW IN CALORIES, SATURATED FAT AND SALT.
- D) LIMIT ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION.
- E) LIMIT AMOUNT OF LIQUIDS THAT YOU DRINK.
- F) WEIGH YOURSELF DAILY AND WATCH FOR FLUID BUILDUP.
- G) START AN AEROBIC EXERCISE PROGRAM THAT IS APPROVED BY YOUR DOCTOR.

THE BEST WAY TO PREVENT CHF IS TO PRACTICE HEALTHY LIFESTYLE HABITS THAT REDUCE YOUR CHANCES OF DEVELOPING A HEART PROBLEM. MOST PEOPLE WITH MILD OR MODERATE CHF CAN BE TREATED. PROPER MEDICAL SUPERVISION CAN PREVENT THEM FROM BECOMING INVALIDS.