

February 8-14 Is National Heart Failure Awareness Week: Know The Symptoms

24 Jan 2009 [Click to Print](#)

February 8-14 is National Heart Failure Awareness Week. The American Association of Heart Failure Nurses (AAHFN) encourages everyone to learn the symptoms of heart failure and offers tips on maintaining a healthy heart.

Heart failure is a progressive condition in which the heart muscle weakens or stiffens and gradually loses its ability to pump enough blood to supply the body's needs. Because of this, you may feel tired or weak. This problem can also cause fluid buildup in your organs and tissues, leading to swelling in your legs and feet, or congestion in your lungs, leading to increased breathing difficulties. Heart failure is frighteningly common, but under recognized. It affects more than five million people in the U.S., and it's the most common cause of hospitalization in people older than 65 years of age.

Many people with heart failure are not aware they have it. The following symptoms could signal heart failure. If you have any of these for more than a week, call your health care provider to schedule a check-up.

Shortness of breath You may feel like you don't get enough air when you breathe. You may "huff and puff" even when you're not doing anything tiring. If fluid has built up in your lungs, it makes it harder to breathe. This can get worse at night because when you lie down even more fluid can build up and around your lungs.

Frequent coughing You may experience a persistent cough. The coughing can get worse at night.

Fast heart rate or heavy heart beat Your heart may feel like it is racing or pounding.

Tiredness and weakness If you feel tired and weak, you cannot work and do the normal things you do every day. Even walking up stairs or carrying shopping bags is hard.

Swollen ankles, legs, and/or belly These are all places where fluid may build up. This can lead to swelling, making them seem "puffy" and larger than normal. Your shoes and/or rings may feel tight. Your clothes may also feel tight around your waist. This swelling is often worse at the end of the day.

Loss of appetite and/or nausea You may not want to eat even when you should be hungry. You also may feel sick to your stomach.

Weight gain When extra fluid builds up, it shows up on the scale as extra weight. A sudden weight gain of three to five pounds in a few days, especially when accompanied by shortness of breath, is a signal to seek assistance.

Although there is no cure for heart failure, it can be treated and managed. Your health care provider will work with you to create a plan to help manage your heart failure. The key parts of this plan are diet, exercise, lifestyle changes, and medication.

The American Association of Heart Failure Nurses (AAHFN) is a specialty organization dedicated to advancing nursing education, clinical practice and research to improve heart failure patient outcomes. The organization's goal is to set the standards for heart failure nursing care. For more information about AAHFN, visit <http://aahfn.org>.

American Association of Heart Failure Nurses
15000 Commerce Pkwy, Ste. C
Mount Laurel
NJ 08054
United States

<http://aahfn.org>

Article URL: <http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/136563.php>

Main News Category: Cardiovascular / Cardiology

Any medical information published on this website is not intended as a substitute for informed medical advice and you should not take any action before consulting with a health care professional. For more information, please read our [terms and conditions](#).

Save time! Get the latest medical news headlines for your specialist area, in a weekly newsletter e-mail. See <http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/newsletters.php> for details.

Send your press releases to pressrelease@medicalnewstoday.com