

# Heart Failure

## What is Heart Failure

Heart Failure is a chronic, progressive condition in which the heart muscle is unable to pump enough blood to meet the body's needs for blood and oxygen. The heart cannot keep up with its workload. Anyone can develop heart failure, but most patients have other heart conditions such as high blood pressure, coronary artery disease, or a previous heart attack. Heart failure cannot be cured but many symptoms can be managed with medications and lifestyle changes.

## Signs and Symptoms

- Swelling, especially in your feet and legs
- Shortness of breath
- Fatigue
- Decreased appetite
- Confusion
- Increased heart rate
- Persistent cough

## Management

- Heart healthy, low sodium diet
- Weight loss
- Limit alcohol and caffeine consumption
- Track daily weight
- Monitor Blood pressure
- Monitor and track symptoms
- Elevate legs
- Compression stockings
- Sleep with head of bed elevated

## Treatment

- Medications to control blood pressure (ACE inhibitors, ARBs)\_\_\_\_\_
- Medication to reduce heart rate (Beta Blockers)\_\_\_\_\_
- Medication to rid the body of excess fluid (Diuretics, commonly known as "water pills")  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Oxygen\_\_\_\_\_
- Other comfort measures \_\_\_\_\_

## What should I communicate to the hospice/palliative care team?

- Rapid weight gain (2-3lb in 24 hr or 5lb in one week)
- Increased swelling in legs or abdomen
- Difficulty breathing especially when resting
- Trouble sleeping
- Constant dry, hacking cough

If you need help with your symptoms, call VNA 24hrs a day:

**214-689-0000**