

Mastery Series: Congestive Heart Failure—What Is It?

1. Define Congestive Heart Failure.
2. What are the symptoms a doctor may notice while examining a patient with CHF?
3. What might the patient say about his/her difficulties?
4. What types of Diagnostic tests are used for CHF?
5. What are risk factors that may lead to CHF and why?

CHF: What Is It?

Mastery Series Answers

1. When the heart is unable to pump enough blood to meet cardiac output's changing needs.
2. Jugular vein distention (edema); ascites (abdominal edema); swollen ankles (edema); S3 gallop (sloshing of extra fluid in heart); crackles in lung (pulmonary edema)
3. Tired, short of breath, gaining weight but no appetite (this is water weight), frequent urination (due to volume overload), have to sleep sitting up
4. X-ray (fluid accumulation/enlarged heart); echocardiogram (valve problems, decreased Stroke Volume, ejection fraction); blood tests (elevated BNP or other hormones indicating volume overload in the heart)
5. Hypertension—causes heart to work too hard with increased afterload; valve problems—allows backflow and makes heart work too hard; myocardial infarctions—previous heart attacks may have resulted in severe ischemia to muscle fibers resulting in collagen (scar) tissue replacing muscle fibers