

## **Heart Failure**

Heart failure or congestive heart failure (CHF) is a condition in which the quantity of blood pumped by the heart each minute is insufficient to meet the body's normal requirements for oxygen and nutrients. Heart failure does not mean the heart has stopped, the term refers to diminished ability of the heart to keep up with its workload.

### **Causes:**

Heart failure may result from one or the sum of many causes. It is a progressive disorder that must be managed in regard to not only the state of the heart, but the condition of the circulation, lungs, neuroendocrine system and other organs as well.

### **Symptoms:**

- Swelling of feet and ankles
- Swelling of the abdomen
- Shortness of breath
- Sudden weight gain due to accumulation of fluids
- Persistent cough due to accumulation of fluids in the lungs
- Pronounced neck veins
- Loss of appetite, indigestion
- Nausea and vomiting
- Difficulty sleeping
- Fatigue, weakness, faintness
- Sensation of feeling the heart beat (palpitations)
- Irregular or rapid pulse
- Decreased alertness or concentration
- Decreased urine production
- Need to urinate at night

### **Treatment:**

#### **Non-pharmacological measures**

- Patients with CHF are educated to undertake various non-pharmacological measures to improve symptoms and prognosis. Such measures include:
- Moderate physical activity, when symptoms are mild or moderate; or bed rest when symptoms are severe.
- Weight reduction through physical activity and dietary modification
- Sodium restriction
- Smoking cessation

#### **Pharmacological management**

Drugs used include: diuretic agents, vasodilator agents, positive inotropes, ACE inhibitors, beta blockers, and aldosterone antagonists.