



American Heart Association®

Healthy for Good™

# WHAT IS HEART FAILURE?

If you have heart failure, you're not alone. About 5.7 million Americans are living with it today. The term heart failure can be confusing because it does not mean that the heart has stopped pumping; it means the heart is not pumping like it should. If the heart is not working properly, then not enough blood is being pumped to the rest of the body. This can cause the body to stop functioning properly.

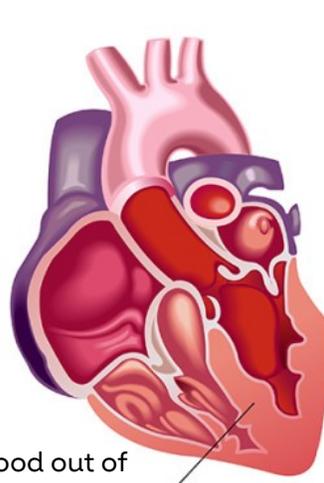
There are many conditions that can lead to heart failure including high blood pressure, coronary heart disease and diabetes. It can take years for heart failure to develop, so it is important to know the signs and symptoms. Many people who have heart failure can lead an enjoyable life when they commit to making lifestyle changes, manage their symptoms and take their heart failure medications.

## What can happen?

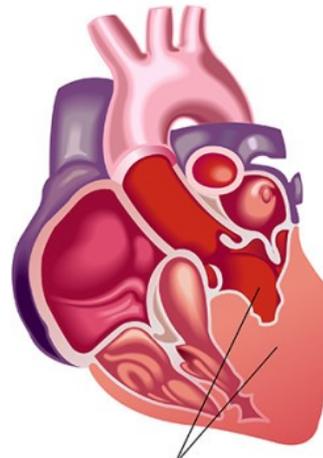
- Your heart does not pump enough blood.
- Blood backs up in your veins.
- Fluid builds up in your body, causing swelling in your feet, ankles and legs. This is called "edema."
- Fluid builds up in your lungs. This is called "pulmonary edema."
- Your body does not get enough blood, food and oxygen.

### Normal Heart

has strong muscular walls which contract to pump blood out to all parts of the body.



Heart muscle pumps blood out of the left ventricle.



Weakened muscle prevents left ventricle from pumping enough blood.

### A Heart with Heart Failure

has a heart wall muscle that slowly weakens and enlarges, preventing the heart from pumping enough blood.

For more tools and information on managing heart failure visit:  
[www.heart.org/oregonheartfailure](http://www.heart.org/oregonheartfailure)

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