
Heart Failure and Depression

Heart failure is an ongoing (chronic) health problem. Heart failure doesn't mean your heart stops working. It means your heart doesn't pump as well as it should. This leads to problems in many parts of the body. Some people have more than 1 health problem at a time. You may also have depression if you have been diagnosed with heart failure.

You may have depression if you feel down most days or are having problems with appetite or sleep. Depression is as real and serious an illness as heart failure. It makes you feel sad and helpless. It gets in the way of your life and relationships. It interferes with your ability to think and act. Treatment can help improve these symptoms. Your overall health may also improve when depression is under control.



How does heart failure raise your risk for depression?

A person with heart failure is at a higher risk for depression. And a person with depression is at a higher risk for heart failure. Each can increase the risk of developing the other. The link between them is not completely understood. Coping with heart failure can take a lot of effort. This can affect how you feel. Some medicines can also change your mood. Many of the behaviors that often come with depression, such as smoking and alcohol abuse, are risk factors for all heart diseases. For people with heart failure, depression can also increase the risk for a heart attack or blood clots.

Symptoms

Many of the symptoms of heart failure may seem like symptoms of depression. It can be hard to tell which condition is causing them. It's normal to feel sad or irritable after being diagnosed with heart failure. But if these feelings last for more than 2 weeks, depression may be the cause. Signs of depression can include:

- Lack of interest in activities
- Depressed mood or irritability
- Changes in sleep patterns
- Changes in appetite

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- Feelings of guilt or despair
 - Lack of energy
 - Trouble concentrating
 - Suicidal thoughts

Diagnosing depression

There's no physical test for depression. But if you have depression symptoms most of the day, every day, for more than 2 weeks, contact your healthcare provider. This is especially important if:

- You have symptoms of depression that aren't getting any better
- You have thoughts of self-harm or suicide
- Your work, relationships with friends and family, or interests are affected by your mood

Treatment for heart failure and depression

Depression is an ongoing (chronic) health problem. But treating depression can help you feel better. Treatment can also improve your quality of life. Many treatment choices can ease your symptoms. They can help you stay motivated to improve your heart health. Symptoms of depression may disappear as heart failure gets under control. Your healthcare provider will work with you to make a treatment plan that may include:

- Medicines to help treat the symptoms of depression
- Talk therapy (psychotherapy)
- CBT (cognitive behavioral therapy)
- Peer support
- Regular exercise
- Cardiac rehab (rehabilitation) program