

# Medical Animation: When Heart Failure Worsens

Heart failure is a serious long term condition that usually gets worse slowly over time.

It doesn't mean that your heart is stopped, but that it's not pumping blood as well as it should.

Since your heart cannot pump well, the rest of your body tries to compensate by retaining salt and water.

To increase the amount of blood in the bloodstream, your heart may get bigger and beat faster. It can cause irregular, abnormal heartbeats. But at some point, your heart and body will no longer be able to keep up, then fluid starts to build up in your body called congestion and can cause rapid weight gain.

The fluid may build up in your lungs, leading to wheezing or shortness of breath, even at rest, as heart failure gets worse over time. And previous treatments no longer work.

You may notice more or different symptoms. You may have swelling, especially in your legs, ankles and feet, swelling in the abdomen around your stomach can make you nauseated or feel bloated over time.

Reduced blood flow and fluid buildup can lead to kidney or liver failure, if untreated.

Your doctor may recommend certain treatments that may help ease symptoms, such as keeping blood pressure low, maintaining fluid balance, limiting sodium intake, monitoring weight and taking medications as prescribed.

In certain cases, they may recommend devices such as a pacemaker to regulate your heartbeat. A defibrillator, a mechanical heart pump or a heart transplant.

Heart failure can get worse suddenly. Call your doctor if your heart failure symptoms get worse, you have a sudden change in symptoms or you're having trouble keeping even minor symptoms under control.