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Heart Failure: Warning Signs of a Flare-Up

You have a condition called heart failure (also known as congestive heart failure, or CHF). Once you have heart failure, flare-ups can happen. Below are signs that can mean your heart failure is getting worse. If you notice any of these warning signs, call your health care provider.

Swelling



- Your ankles or lower legs get puffier.
- Your shoes feel too tight.
- Your clothes are tighter in the waist.
- You have trouble getting rings on or off your fingers.

Shortness of breath

- You have to breathe harder even when you're doing your normal activities or when you're resting.
- You wake up at night short of breath or coughing.
- You need to use more pillows or sit up to sleep.

Other warning signs

- You feel weaker, dizzy, or more tired.
- You have chest pain or changes in your heartbeat.
- You have a cough that won't go away.
- You can't remember things or don't feel like eating.

Tracking your weight

Gaining weight is often the first warning sign that heart failure is getting worse. Gaining even a few pounds can be a sign that your body is retaining excess water and salt. Weighing yourself each day is the best way to know if you're retaining water. Your health care provider will show you how to track your weight. Call your doctor if you gain more than 2 pounds in 1 day, 5 pounds in 1 week, or whatever weight gain you were told to report by your doctor. This is often a sign of worsening heart failure. Your doctor will tell you what to do next.

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