

Heart Failure

CAREGIVER RESOURCE

Heart failure, also known as congestive heart failure, occurs when the heart muscle is weakened and unable to pump enough blood to meet the body's need for blood and oxygen. Because of the strain this puts on the heart, the chambers may stretch in an effort to carry more blood. This can cause them to become more stiff and thickened. Overtime, the heart walls can weaken and affect the strength of the blood pumping through the body.

Causes of Heart Failure

- Coronary artery disease: a disease of the arteries that supply blood and oxygen to the heart, causes decreased blood flow to the heart muscle. If the arteries become blocked or severely narrowed, the heart becomes starved for oxygen and nutrients.
- Heart attack: occurs when a coronary artery becomes suddenly blocked, stopping the flow of blood to the heart muscle. A heart attack damages the heart muscle, resulting in a scarred area that does not function properly.
- Cardiomyopathy: damage to the heart muscle from causes other than artery or blood flow problems, such as infections or alcohol or drug abuse.
- Conditions that overwork the heart: high blood pressure, valve disease, thyroid disease, kidney disease, diabetes or heart defects present at birth can cause heart failure.

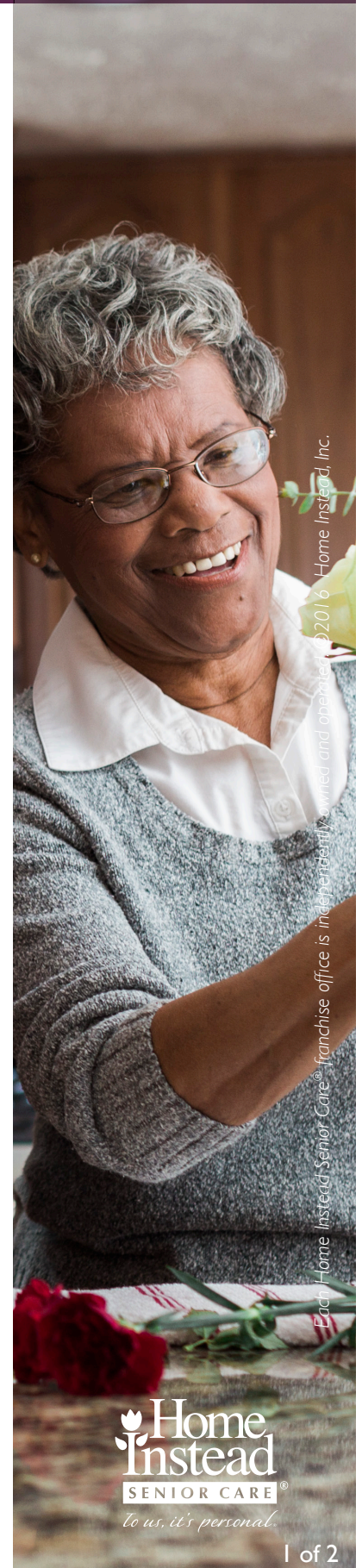
Types of Heart Failure

- Systolic dysfunction (systolic heart failure): occurs when the heart muscle doesn't contract with enough force, so less oxygen-rich blood is pumped throughout the body.
- Diastolic dysfunction (diastolic heart failure): occurs when the heart contracts normally, but the ventricles do not relax properly or are stiff, and less blood enters the heart.

Symptoms of Heart Failure

- Congested lungs: Fluid backup in the lungs can cause shortness of breath while exercising or difficulty breathing while resting or when lying flat. Lung congestion can also cause a dry, hacking cough or wheezing.
- Fluid and water retention: less blood to the kidneys causes fluid and water retention, resulting in swollen ankles, legs, abdomen (called edema) and weight gain. Symptoms may cause an increased need to urinate. Bloating in the stomach may cause a loss of appetite or nausea.
- Dizziness, fatigue, and weakness: less blood to the major organs and muscles makes a person feel tired and weak. Less blood to the brain can cause dizziness or confusion.
- Rapid or irregular heartbeats: the heart beats faster to pump enough blood to the body. This can cause a rapid or irregular heartbeat.

Source: <http://www.webmd.com/heart-disease/guide-heart-failure> (Access 6/21/16)



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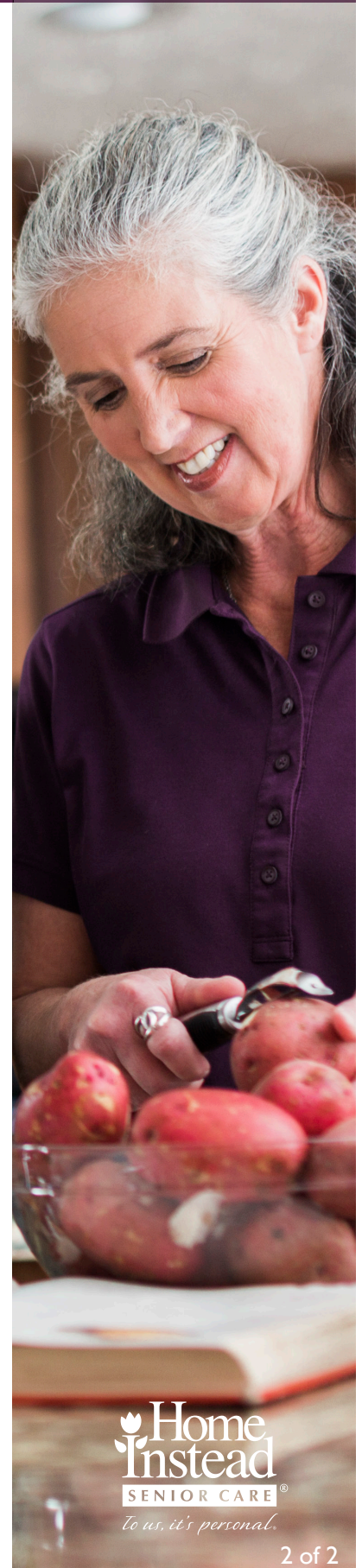
Treatment for Heart Failure

Heart failure is a chronic disease. While there is not a cure, heart failure can be managed. Depending on the stage of the heart failure, there are several treatments that can help people live longer and comfortable. For many people, treatment involves a balance of medications and, in some situations, use of devices that help the heart beat and contract properly.

Source: <http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/heart-failure/basics/treatment/con-20029801>
(Access 8/3/16)

Role of a CAREGiverSM

- Plan and prepare healthy meals.
- Encourage the client to exercise regularly, following physician's instructions.
- Provide transportation to medical appointments.
- Remind the client to take her medication on a regular schedule.
- Be patient. It may take longer for the client to complete tasks.
- Plan appropriate activities. A person with heart failure may not be able to go for long walks without frequent breaks.
- Provide a stress-free environment. When someone is anxious or upset, the heart beats faster; they breathe more heavily and the blood pressure often goes up. This can make heart failure worse.
- Encourage the client to rest and get a good night's sleep.
- Check the client for swelling daily. Call the franchise office immediately if the client has any changes in swelling in her legs, ankles or feet.
- Recognize, report and record. Be the eyes and ears for the client in the home. Report any changes or concerns to the franchise office as soon as possible.
- Call the franchise office immediately if you recognize changes or if the client's symptoms worsen.



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