

Heart Failure and Depression

Depression is **common** in people with heart failure.

- Depression is present in up to 70% of patients in the hospital.
- Depression is present in about 20% to 30% of people with heart failure.
- It is higher in females than males.

Depression can lead to more symptoms of heart failure and more time in the hospital. It can decrease the quality of life and make heart failure harder to treat.

Heart failure and depression have some of the same signs and symptoms. Treating depression can improve health status.

Depression is a medical condition, not a flaw in a person.

Once you have heart failure, people react in different ways. Many people will have **anxiety, denial, depression, and fear**. It is ok to have these feelings, but it is important to be aware of them and talk to your health care provider. Then, you can make a plan to cope with these feelings.

Signs of Depression

- Feeling sad, lonely, and gloomy most of the day.
- **Having less energy or no energy to do things that you used to do.**
- **Needing more or less sleep.**
- **No desire for food or eating more food than usual.**
- Weight changes.
- Having thoughts of guilt, worthlessness, hopelessness or suicide.
- Feeling like you have nothing to live for.

Signs of Heart Failure

- **No energy.**
- **Tire easily.**
- **Feeling crabby and on edge.**
- **Don't want to eat.**
- Hard to breathe when at rest or lying flat.
- Weight gain despite loss of appetite.
- Swollen abdomen, legs, arms, and face.
- Out of breath or short of breath.
- Cough.
- Chest congestion.

What can you do?

Healthy habits and choices can help you feel better and improve your heart failure and depression.

- Avoid tobacco and alcohol.
- Eat a heart-healthy diet.
- Exercise. It can reduce your depressive symptoms and improve cardiac fitness.
- Get enough sleep.
- Take your medicines.

Talk to your health care provider if you notice any signs and symptoms of depression. Learn about your illness and how it affects you. Think about how you cope with stress and write down what helps you cope and what does not help. Some skills to help cope are:

- Talk to your family and friends.
- Stay active with your hobbies/activities that you like to do.
- Learn to relax.
- Learn to avoid blaming yourself.
- Write a "to do list" and rest in between the tasks.

- Allow yourself grieving time. Everyone needs time to come to terms with changes in your life.
- Join a support group. You're not alone.
- Counseling and medicines can also help treat depression.

Resources

American Heart Association
www.heart.org (search depression)

Heart Failure Society of America
www.hfsa.org

Mental Health America: mhanational.org
mendedhearts.org

National Alliance on Mental
Illness/Wisconsin
<https://namiwisconsin.org>

UW Health Heart Failure Program
(608) 263-1690

National Alliance on Mental Health - Dane
County
www.namidanecounty.org
(608) 249-7188
contact@namidanecounty.org

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 10/2022 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#6885