

HEART HEALTH

What You Should Know About Treating And Managing Heart Failure

(NAPSA)—The state of Florida is taking steps to get to the heart of a life-threatening condition.

According to experts, the condition—heart failure—is responsible for approximately 39,000 deaths annually and is the contributing cause of death for another 225,000 people each year.

Since heart failure is most common among older people, as the U.S. population ages the number of people with heart failure or caring for someone with the condition is also expected to increase. This is likely to make it an even more significant public health issue in the future.

“Heart failure” means the heart loses its ability to pump blood to other organs in the body because of a weakening of the heart muscle. This weakening may lead to a buildup of fluid in tissues throughout the body, including the lungs. This is where the term “congestive heart failure” comes from.

Symptoms of heart failure may include shortness of breath, persistent coughing and/or wheezing from fluid buildup in the lungs or an increased heart rate, swelling in feet and legs, loss of appetite, nausea, confusion or impaired thinking.

Fast Facts On Heart Failure

- 550,000 new cases of heart failure are diagnosed each year, primarily among people over age 65.
- Nearly five million Americans are currently living with heart failure.
- Heart failure can be managed, but not cured.
- Men are at higher risk for heart failure than women, although the difference narrows with age.
- African-Americans are at a higher risk for heart failure than they are for diabetes.

Source: American Heart Association (www.americanheart.org/chf/);
Living with Heart Failure Web site; MSNBC Heart Health
Web site (www.msnbc.com/news/hearthealth)



Fortunately there are a number of steps, including lifestyle changes, that people can take to lower the risk of developing heart disease, including:

- quitting smoking;
- keeping blood pressure levels at or below 140/90;
- keeping “bad” cholesterol in check;
- following a low-fat, high-fiber diet;
- exercising regularly; and
- losing weight if overweight.

There are also a number of steps a patient who has already

had a heart attack can take to prevent a second cardiac event. These include taking medication, such as low-dose aspirin, blood-thinning drugs, ACE inhibitors, beta-blockers and cholesterol-lowering medication.

To better manage this chronic disease, which requires continuous management and treatment, a new healthcare initiative has been implemented in Florida. Called “Florida: A Healthy State,” the program educates people about a variety of health issues, including heart failure.

The initiative is a collaboration between Florida’s Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) and the pharmaceutical company Pfizer.

The program uses the resources and expertise of major medical centers and physicians across the state and state-of-the-art software to track and coordinate patient care. Ultimately, the goal is to expand this program to other states across the country.

If you would like to learn more about heart failure, please visit the Heart Failure Society of America’s Web site, www.hfsa.org or the American Heart Association at www.americanheart.org.