

HEART FAILURE

with Ellen Hillegass, PT



WHAT IS IT?

- Heart failure is when the heart is unable/fails to meet the demands of the body.
- Cardiogenic shock: extremely low cardiac output, unable to meet any demands and patient will die if not treat.
- Right heart failure (RHF): inability to pump enough blood to lungs for gas exchange, back up in the periphery, swelling in hands feet, jugular venous distension.
- Left heart failure (LHF): inability to pump sufficiently to rest of body, back up to lungs with congestion of lungs. Complaints of orthopnea, dyspnea at night and with activities.
- Systolic heart failure: inability to pump sufficiently out of heart, lower ejection fraction, problem with squeezing of the heart, similar to LHF.
- Diastolic heart failure: inability for heart to sufficiently relax or allow blood into the heart (preload), normal ejection fraction, decreased blood to supply body during activity.

SPECIAL TESTS

- Observation - breathing pattern, jugular venous distention, edema swelling in hands and/or feet
- Asking if patient can lay flat or if pillows are needed to sleep
- Auscultate lungs
 - Fluid in lungs when sitting would sound like bibasilar crackles or rales (heard with LHF, not RHF)
- Vital signs
 - Resting BP - should be systolic >90 mm Hg
 - Resting HR - should be < 100 bpm
 - Normal SpO2
- Chest X-Ray
- Echocardiography - can tell us about ejection fraction (<35% is HF)
- Lab tests - Brain natriuretic peptide (BNP) > 700 is decompensated HF



DIFFERENTIAL DIAGNOSIS

- Lung disease - SOB, inability to lie down, lower SpO2, changes in chest wall
 - Asthma, COPD, interstitial lung disease
- Look at symptoms, SpO2, physical features, and auscultate



- PTs do not work with decompensated HF
 - SOB at rest
 - Cannot perform activities
 - May not be able to lay down

TREATMENT EXAMPLES

- PTs work with compensated HF
- Evaluate response to progressive activities
- Maintain normal response to HR, BP, SpO2
- Limit exercise duration to tolerance, multiple bouts
 - Strengthening, sit to stands, walking
- Education and prevention of symptoms, fluid retention (check weight daily), and decompensated HF

EXAMPLE QUESTION

Patient reports he has been more short of breath since discharge from hospital and has noticed he needs to sleep on more pillows, very short of breath when laying down. What type of exercise program should we do with the patient today?

1. Call the MD
2. Educate on sleeping position
3. Check vitals before walking
4. Have patient rest on table sitting for 10 minutes to catch his breath



Answer: Call the MD

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