



## Heart Health Fact Sheet



Heart failure (HF) is not the same thing as a heart attack. A heart attack is when the blood supply to the heart is impacted, the muscle is damaged and the heart potentially stops completely, which is also known as a cardiac arrest. HF is when your heart does not pump blood effectively. Also known as congestive heart failure, this means that the heart muscle is not sending enough blood around the body because it is too weak, thick or stiff to fill and pump as it should. It can also cause fluid to build up in the lungs and around the body.

### WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

It depends on what type of heart failure you are experiencing, There are four main types of heart failure:

- **Diastolic:** The left ventricle (the main pumping chamber) cannot relax or fill effectively
- **Systolic:** The left ventricle cannot pump effectively
- **Right-sided:** Fluid builds up in areas such as legs and abdomen
- **Left-sided:** An accumulation of fluid in the lungs that can cause shortness of breath.

Symptoms can be similar to other heart diseases. If you experience any of these, see your doctor:

- Shortness of breath
- Coughing up foamy mucus
- Swelling of legs or abdomen
- Nausea
- Chest pain
- Decreased appetite
- Weakness and lethargy
- Fatigue or weakness
- Rapid or irregular heartbeat
- Difficulty concentrating
- Increased need to urinate
- Significant weight gain, around 2kg in a few days, from fluid retention

### WHAT ARE THE CAUSES?

Other heart conditions such as high blood pressure and coronary artery disease, narrow arteries, can cause your heart to have to work harder and eventually become weak. The heart can also stiffen without having had prior issues.

Some of the other known causes of heart failure include:

- Cardiomyopathy
- Heart valve disease
- Congenital heart issues
- Arrhythmias (abnormal heart rhythms)
- Diabetes
- Sleep apnea

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## Heart Failure

### WHAT ARE THE STATISTICS?

- Almost 144,000 people (0.6% of the Australian population) live with heart failure.
- The true incidence of heart failure may be much higher as the early stages of HF are only mildly symptomatic.
- The number of people who reported living with heart failure increased substantially between 2017-18 and 2022.
- Heart failure accounts for almost 1 in 50 deaths, equating to one person dying of heart failure every 2.5 hours, or 9 people losing their lives each day.
- More women die for heart failure overall, but when adjusted for age and population size the rate for males and females is similar.
- Women in Australia have less hospitalisations than men for heart failure.
- Heart failure predominantly affects older Australians, with two thirds of respondents aged 65 years and over.
- Heart failure is more prominent in Aboriginal and Torres-Strait Islander populations.
- In the UK, women have a high incidence of HF than men, however in Australia men have a higher incidence than women.

### WHAT ARE THE TREATMENTS?

- **Lifestyle treatments** help control the conditions that can cause HF in the first place. They include:
  - Controlling diabetes and blood pressure
  - Quit smoking
  - Exercising
  - Eating well and maintaining a healthy weight
  - Reducing stress
  - Reducing salt intake to prevent fluid retention
  - Restricting fluid intake to 1.5L to prevent fluid retention
  - Getting the flu vaccination, to reduce the chance of chest infections
- **Medical treatments:** *Take all medications as directed by your doctor and pharmacist*
  - Diuretics: To remove excess fluid
  - Digoxin: To slow your heart rate and improve its ability to pump
  - Beta-blockers: To regulate heart rhythm
  - ACE inhibitors: To decrease salt in your body and reduce blood pressure
  - Aldosterone antagonists: Diuretics for people with heart failure
  - Angiotensin II receptor blockers: To relax blood vessels and reduce blood pressure
- **Procedures:**
  - Pacemaker: To regulate the heart rhythm
  - Implantable cardiac defibrillator (ICD): To restore a normal rhythm to the lower heart chambers.
  - Heart valve surgery: To repair or replace a heart valve, which can reduce symptoms
  - Heart transplant: An option if the heart doesn't respond to other treatments.

### RESOURCES

[Mayo Clinic \(US\)](#) • [Heart Heart Foundation \(AUS\)](#)

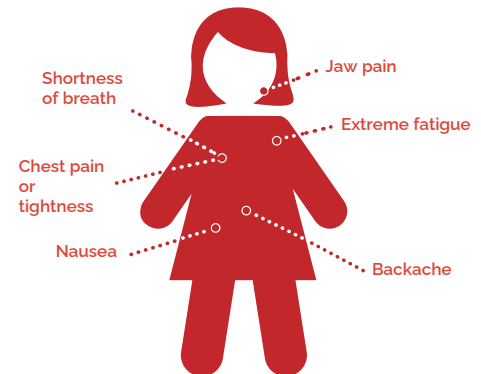


# 0.6%

of the Australian adult population live with heart failure, but experts believe the number is much higher as the early stages of the disease are only mildly symptomatic.

### HEART ATTACK SIGNS IN WOMEN

Warning signs differ between men and women. Women's symptoms include chest discomfort which radiates up to the throat, jaw and through to the back and shoulder blades, extreme fatigue, shortness of breath, heart fluttering, light-headedness and nausea.



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