

Let's Talk About: Heart Failure



ST. PAUL'S HOSPITAL
COMMUNITY FORUMS

What is Heart Failure?

Heart failure (HF) is generally defined as inability of the heart to pump sufficient blood flow to meet the body's needs.

It has been estimated that around 500,000 Canadians are living with heart failure and 50,000 new patients are diagnosed each year. Heart failure occurs when the heart muscle becomes damaged. There are many ways the heart muscle can become damaged, some common reasons are:

- Coronary artery disease
- Suffering a previous heart attack
- High blood pressure
- Diabetes
- Born with a heart defect
- Infection
- Lung Disease

When the heart's muscle becomes enlarged (dilated), less blood is pumped out with each heart beat. Less blood is also pumped if your heart muscle becomes thicker (hypertrophic). This happens because there is less space in the heart chamber for blood. Blood carries nutrients and oxygen to our body tissues. Therefore, when less blood is pumped out, less nutrients and oxygen get delivered to our body tissues.

Symptoms of Heart Failure

When less blood is pumped to your body tissues, you may feel symptoms of tiredness, fatigue and dizziness. Fluid can build up in the lungs causing shortness of breath. Fluid can also build up in the legs and/or belly causing them to swell. The build up of fluid in the body is called "edema," which is a common symptom of heart failure.

Other common symptoms of heart failure are:

- Weakness
- Loss of appetite
- Cold hands and feet
- Waking up from sleep with shortness of breath or feeling smothered when you lie down to try and sleep

- Unable to sleep
- A dry, hacking cough

Early diagnosis and treatment can help people who have heart failure live longer, more active lives. Treatment for heart failure will depend on the type and stage of heart failure (the severity of the condition).

The goals of treatment for all stages of heart failure include:

- Treating the underlying cause of the heart failure
- Reducing symptoms
- Stopping the heart failure from getting worse
- Increasing your lifespan and improving your quality of life

Treatments usually include lifestyle changes, medicines, and ongoing care. If you have severe heart failure, you also may need medical procedures or surgery.

Heart Failure Care at St. Paul's Hospital Provincial and Regional Hub

St. Paul's Hospital assumes a leadership role in British Columbia and acts as the Provincial Hub and one of 2 regional hubs for heart failure (HF) care. As such, patients with severe HF that cannot be treated at their local hospital will be transferred here to the Heart Centre. St. Paul's Hospital provides a full range of specialized services including diagnostics, medical and surgical care, mechanical device implantation and transplantation. We are also home to one of two regional HF clinics and a number of other innovative models of care for HF patients.

The Heart Function Clinic

In 1999, the Heart Function Clinic at St Paul's was launched. The goal of the clinic is to ensure that patients with chronic heart failure receive the best possible treatment based on the latest research available. This helps patients to live longer and reduce admissions to the hospital. The Heart Function Clinic

Join medical experts from Providence Health Care for monthly community forums at St. Paul's Hospital. Each month features a different health topic with time to pose questions to the experts.

The forums are free and take place the third Wednesday of every month.

7:00 – 9:00 pm
(doors open at 6:30)
New Lecture Theatre
St. Paul's Hospital
1081 Burrard Street

For more information and to register, please email ownyourhealth@providencehealth.bc.ca or call 604-806-8495.

This evening's presentations will be available to view on our website:

www.phcmedicine.ca

Sponsored by:





Heart Failure Treatment and Research at St. Paul's Hospital

consists of a multi-disciplinary team offering specialty support services to patients with heart failure in BC including assessment, education and treatment. The clinic is composed of a team of Heart Failure physicians, nurses and allied health professionals.

The Heart Function Clinic at St. Paul's is a member of The Canadian Heart Failure Network (CHFNet). Membership in this network allows our team to network with experts across the country. They provide access to a national database which contributes to a rich source of data for ongoing research. Membership also allows our team to collaborate in innovative research approaches to optimize patient management.

Acute Heart Failure

A small number of patients in BC develop acute failure requiring extraordinary measures to survive. British Columbia's Acute Heart Failure Program, part of Providence Health Care's Heart and Lung Institute at St. Paul's Hospital, is the only program in BC which provides a full range of specialized care to these patients. Funded by the Provincial Health Services Authority and Providence Health Care, this program has pioneered many leading edge treatments and technologies. Two such treatments include Ventricular Assist Devices and cardiac transplantation.

The Ventricular Assist Device or VAD program began at St. Paul's Hospital in 2002 and we currently implant about 16 of these devices each year. The VAD is a small but powerful mechanical heart pump that takes over the pumping action of the heart following illness or surgery. They reduce the heart's workload allowing the heart to rest while providing blood to body organs. They may be used short term to allow the heart to rest and recover or when this is not possible, they can be used long term as patients await heart transplantation.

Cardiac Transplantation is a therapy reserved for patients with end-stage heart disease not amenable to conventional therapy. As there is a limited supply of donor hearts, potentially eligible patients must meet strict listing criteria. Last year we performed 22 heart transplants. Transplant patients at St. Paul's are supported throughout the process before transplant in the Pre Transplant Clinic and after receiving their new heart in the Post Transplant Clinic. Both clinics are multi-disciplinary and attempt to meet all the needs of patients by providing physical, emotional, spiritual and social support.

Innovative Programs

virtual Heart Function Clinic (vHFC):

The vHFC was developed in 2005 in collaboration between St. Paul's Hospital, UBC, and SFU. The internet based program provides a tool whereby HF patients can log on each day and enter their daily clinical information. Nurses monitoring the system are alerted to patient information that falls outside parameters. The nurse can then advise the patient on how to handle the situation. This program allows patients to be more active in managing their health from home and thereby help to prevent unnecessary hospital admissions.

Rapid Access to Consultative Expertise (RACE):

The RACE model has evolved into a service whereby family practitioners in BC can consult local specialists for advice with assessing, diagnosing and treating complex patients. Physicians simply place a call to a centralized call centre and indicate which specialty they require consultation. Within two hours the requesting physician will receive a call and the advice they require. The program has proven successful and continues to expand to offer more services.

Sources:

The Canadian Heart Failure Network
www.chfn.ca

Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada
www.heartandstroke.com

St. Paul's Hospital is an acute care, teaching and research hospital located in downtown Vancouver. It is home to many world-class medical and surgical programs, including heart and lung services, HIV/AIDS and kidney care.

St. Paul's serves both the local community and patients from across BC and the Yukon. St. Paul's is one of 14 health care facilities in Vancouver operated by Providence Health Care, one of Canada's largest faith-based health care organizations. Providence's 1,000 physicians and 6,000 staff deliver compassionate care to patients and residents in British Columbia while training medical professionals and making innovative advances in research.

To support programs like this at St. Paul's Hospital, please visit www.helpstpauls.com to make a donation to the Department of Medicine Academic Fund.

www.phcmedicine.ca