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## Classes of Heart Failure

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**1 Understand HF**

**Class I-IV**  
How severe are the patient's symptoms?

- Fatigued or okay with activity?
- No chest pain or palpitation?
- Unusual shortness of breath?
- Comfortable at rest?

**Class A-D**  
What level of problems does the healthcare provider see?

Doctors usually classify patients' heart failure according to the severity of their symptoms. The table below describes the most commonly used classification system, the New York Heart Association (NYHA) Functional Classification<sup>1</sup>. It places patients in one of four categories based on how much they are limited during physical activity.

Class	Patient Symptoms
I	No limitation of physical activity. Ordinary physical activity does not cause undue fatigue, palpitation, dyspnea (shortness of breath).
II	Slight limitation of physical activity. Comfortable at rest. Ordinary physical activity results in fatigue, palpitation, dyspnea (shortness of breath).
III	Marked limitation of physical activity. Comfortable at rest. Less than ordinary activity causes fatigue, palpitation, or dyspnea.
IV	Unable to carry on any physical activity without discomfort. Symptoms of heart failure at rest. If any physical activity is undertaken, discomfort increases.

  

Class	Objective Assessment
A	No objective evidence of cardiovascular disease. No symptoms and no limitation in ordinary physical activity.
B	Objective evidence of minimal cardiovascular disease. Mild symptoms and slight limitation during ordinary activity. Comfortable at rest.
C	Objective evidence of moderately severe cardiovascular disease. Marked limitation in activity due to symptoms, even during less-than-ordinary activity. Comfortable only at rest.
D	Objective evidence of severe cardiovascular disease. Severe limitations. Experiences symptoms even while at rest.

**For Example:**

- A patient with minimal or no symptoms but a large pressure gradient across the aortic valve or severe obstruction of the left main coronary artery is classified:
  - o **Function Capacity I, Objective Assessment D**
- A patient with severe anginal syndrome but angiographically normal coronary arteries is classified:

### Heart Failure

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**RISE ABOVE**  
Heart Failure

## My HF Guide

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### Heart Failure Questions to Ask Your Doctor

**RISE ABOVE**  
Heart Failure: Partnering in Your Treatment

Bring this sheet with you to your appointment and discuss the following with your doctor.

- 01 Understand Your HF**
  - How serious is my heart failure?
  - In what ways does having heart failure increase my health risks?
  - How likely is it that having HF will worsen the effects of other conditions?
- 02 Identify Your HF Needs**
  - Am I a candidate for HF cardiac rehab?
  - Are there any remaining tests we need to do to learn more about my heart? If so, which ones?
- 03 Explore HF Treatment**
  - Are there any activities that are off limits for me at this level? (and specific exercises you may have, like walking, etc., recommended.)
  - What treatment options should I be thinking about for managing my HF?

Use these questions to ask your doctor about heart failure.

o **Functional Capacity IV, Objective Assessment A**

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Dolgin M, Association NYH, Fox AC, Gorlin R, Levin RI, New York Heart Association. *Criteria Committee. Nomenclature and criteria for diagnosis of diseases of the heart and great vessels. 9th ed. Boston, MA: Lippincott Williams and Wilkins; March 1, 1994. Original source: Criteria Committee, New York Heart Association, Inc. Diseases of the Heart and Blood Vessels. Nomenclature and Criteria for diagnosis, 6th edition Boston, Little, Brown and Co. 1964, p 114.*

This content was last reviewed April 2015.



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**HF Series in Heart Insight Magazine**

**Big Heart Problem**  
In the first of a four-part series on heart failure, we investigate what it is, what causes it and what's the prognosis.



**The Unrelaxing Heart**  
The second installment explains heart failure with muscle intact. Queen Latifah and her mom, Rita, share their personal experience with Rita's own heart failure diagnosis.

**The Ins and Outs of Hospitalization**  
Heart failure patients are often hospitalized. This article looks at managing self-care to minimize just how often re-hospitalizations happen.

**Shared Decision Making for Advanced HF**  
When HF progresses to an advanced stage, there are many decisions to be made. Here we delve into the importance of shared decision making.

**HF Resources For Life**

**HF Info Sheets**

- [What is Heart Failure? | Spanish](#)
- [How Can I Live with Heart Failure? | Spanish](#)
- [HF and Your Ejection Fraction Explained](#)
- [Questions To Ask Your Doctor](#)
- [What is Echocardiography?](#)
- [What is a Stress Test?](#)

**HF Lifestyle Sheets**

- [Why Should I Limit Sodium?](#)
- [How Do I Follow a Healthy Diet? | Spanish](#)
- [How Can Physical Activity Become a Way of Life? | Spanish](#)
- [How Can I Make My Lifestyle Healthier?](#)
- [How Can I Support My Loved One?](#)

**Trackers**

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Our mission is to build healthier lives, free of cardiovascular diseases and stroke. That single purpose drives all we do. The need for our work is beyond question. [Find Out More](#)



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