### Classes of Heart Failure

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. It places patients in one of four categories based on how much they are limited during physical activity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Patient Symptoms</th>
<th>Objective Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>No limitation of physical activity. Ordinary physical activity does not cause undue fatigue, palpitation, dyspnea (shortness of breath).</td>
<td>No objective evidence of cardiovascular disease. No symptoms and no limitation in ordinary physical activity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>Marked limitation of physical activity. Comfortable at rest. Less than ordinary activity causes fatigue, palpitation, or dyspnea.</td>
<td>Objective evidence of moderately severe cardiovascular disease. Marked limitation in activity due to symptoms, even during less-than-ordinary activity. Comfortable only at rest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>Unable to carry on any physical activity without discomfort. Symptoms of heart failure at rest. If any physical activity is undertaken, discomfort increases.</td>
<td>Objective evidence of severe cardiovascular disease. Severe limitations. Experiences symptoms even while at rest.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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: 
  - Functional Capacity I, Objective Assessment D
- A patient with severe anginal syndrome but angiographically normal coronary arteries is classified: 
  - Functional Capacity IV, Objective Assessment A

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### Heart Failure Questions to Ask Your Doctor

Use these questions to ask your doctor about heart failure.

- What is the cause of my heart failure?
- How can I manage symptoms of heart failure?
- What can I do to prevent future episodes of heart failure?
- How will my heart failure affect my daily activities and lifestyle?
- What medications are available to treat heart failure, and what are their potential side effects?


This content was last reviewed April 2015.

1 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.

2 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
Symptoms Tracker | Spanish
Medication Tracker | Spanish
Activity Tracker
Blood Pressure Tracker

Find additional helpful resources here

Popular Articles
1 Understanding Blood Pressure Readings
2 Sodium and Salt
3 What are the Symptoms of High Blood Pressure?
4 All About Heart Rate (Pulse)
5 How to Eat Healthy
6 Heart Attack Symptoms in Women
7 Low Blood Pressure - When Blood Pressure Is Too Low
8 Tachycardia | Fast Heart Rate
9 Warning Signs of a Heart Attack
10 Angina (Chest Pain)

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