

Heart Failure Discharge Information

What is heart failure?

Heart failure (HF) means the heart is not pumping blood as well as it should. It may pump at a different speed, pump blood out with less force, or pump out less blood with each beat. Blood backs up in the blood vessels. The extra fluid in the blood vessels seeps into the lungs or other parts of the body. When fluid seeps into the lungs, it makes it hard to breathe. This is called congestion and it's why heart failure is sometimes called congestive heart failure. Fluid seeping into other parts of the body causes swelling. When there is too much fluid in the body, it puts even more strain on the heart. Heart failure is one of the most common causes of heart-related illness and death in the U.S.

How can I take care of myself when I go home?

How long it takes to get better depends on your treatment, how well you recover, your overall health, and any complications you may have. Learn how much activity you can do without making your heart work too hard. The actions you take can help keep your heart failure symptoms from getting worse.

Management

- Your provider will give you a list of medicines when you leave the hospital.
 - Know your medicines. Know what they look like, how much you should take each time, how often you should take them, and why you take each one.
 - Take your medicines exactly as your provider tells you to.
 - Carry a list of your medicines in your wallet or purse. Include any nonprescription medicines and supplements on the list.
 - You will probably take a combination of medicines. Ask your healthcare provider about possible side effects of the drugs prescribed for you. Report any side effects to your provider right away.
 - Some of the medicines used to treat heart failure raise the levels of potassium in your blood. Tell your doctor if you have the symptoms of high potassium, which include muscle weakness, tingling, nausea, tiredness, and sometimes irregular heartbeat.
- Your provider may prescribe medicine to:
 - Relax and widen blood vessels and allow blood to flow through them easier
 - Reduce fluid build-up and swelling in the body
 - Help your heart muscle beat stronger and regularly
 - Help reduce blood pressure, slow the heart rate, and reduce the workload of the heart
 - Help prevent blood clots
 - Replace minerals your body loses when taking certain medicines used to treat your condition

Appointments

- Keep all follow-up appointments.
- Keep appointments for all routine testing you may need.
- Talk with your provider about any questions or fears you have.
- Ask your provider about any medicine or treatment information you do not understand.

Diet, Exercise, and Other Lifestyle Changes

- Follow the treatment plan your healthcare provider prescribes.
- You may need to make changes in some of the foods you eat. Ask your provider about the benefits of talking to a dietician to learn what you need in a healthy diet.
- Do not use salt substitutes unless your doctor tells you to. Many contain high levels of potassium which may raise the potassium levels too much.
- Ask your healthcare provider if there are any foods or medicines you should avoid.
- Drink enough fluids to keep your urine light yellow in color, unless you are told to limit fluids. Follow your healthcare provider's advice on how much liquid you should drink.
- Exercise as your provider recommends.
- Lose weight if you need to and keep a healthy weight.
- Weigh yourself and write down your weight every day. Weight gain may mean your body is having trouble getting rid of extra fluid.
- Don't smoke.
- Find ways to make your life less stressful.

Call your emergency medical services or 911 if you have new or worsening:

- Chest discomfort (pressure, fullness, squeezing or pain) that lasts more than a few minutes or goes away and comes back or chest discomfort that goes to your arms, neck, jaw or back
- Fainting
- Trouble breathing
- Trouble speaking or understanding
- Very fast heart rate

Call your healthcare provider right away if you have new or worsening:

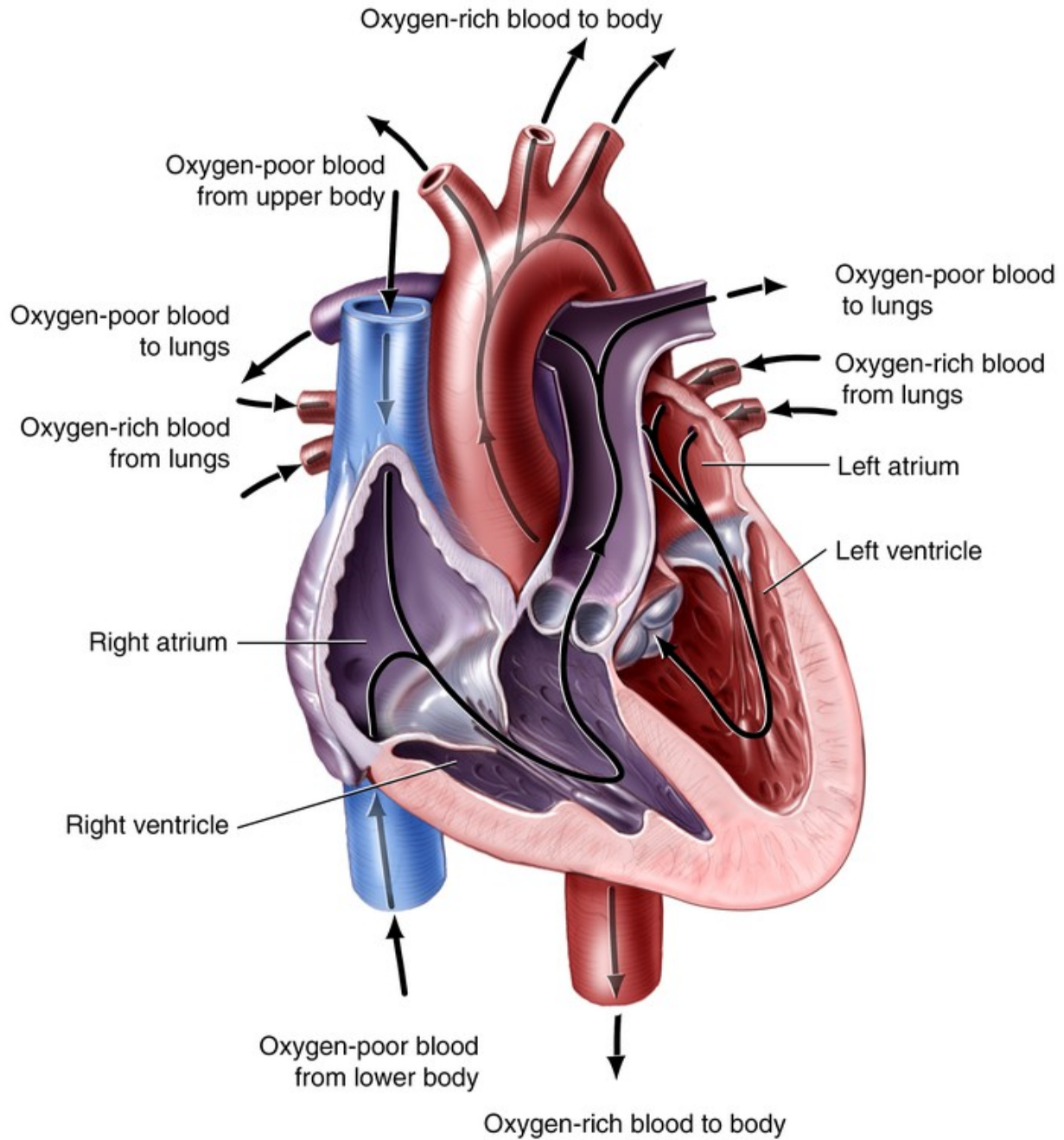
- Dizziness
- Sudden weight gain of 3 pounds in one day or 5 pounds in a week
- Swelling in your feet, ankles, or legs, or abdominal bloating, or swollen hands or face
- Waking up at night with trouble breathing or having a hard time lying flat in bed because of shortness of breath
- Tiredness

- Frequent dry, hacking cough
- Fever higher than 101.5° F (38.6° C)
- Coughing up mucus that is thick or blood-stained

Developed by RelayHealth.

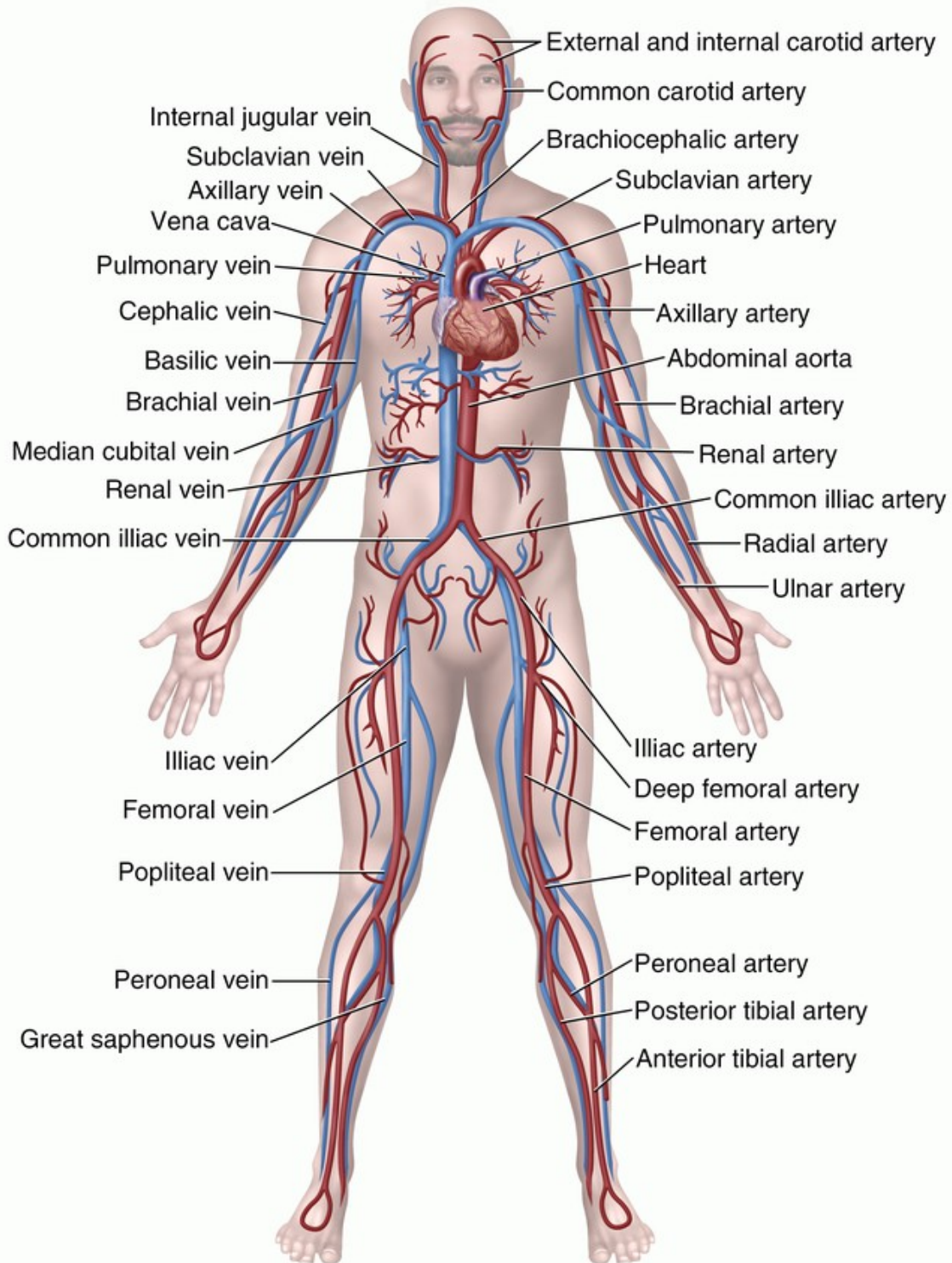
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Blood Flow in Heart



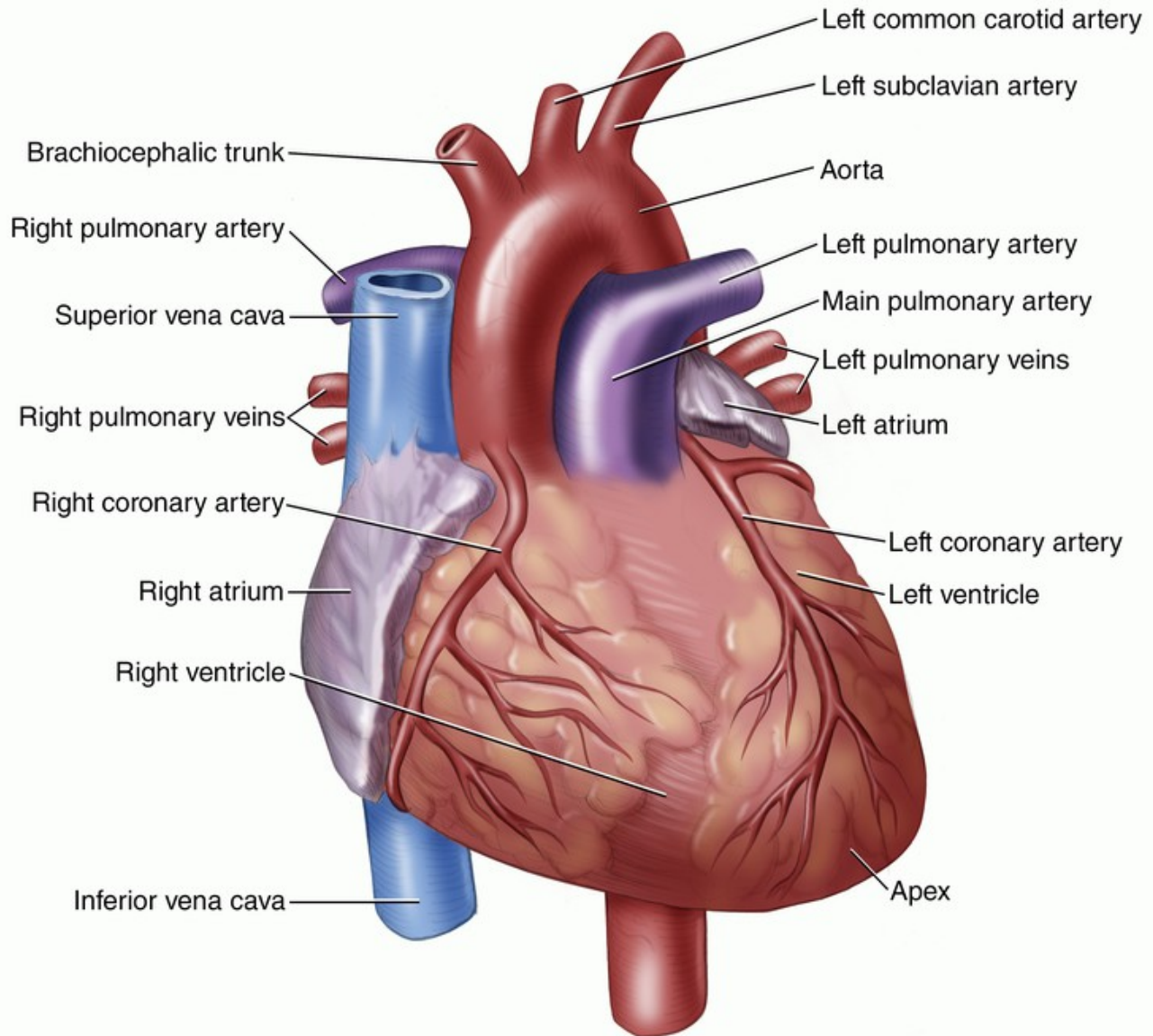
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Circulatory System



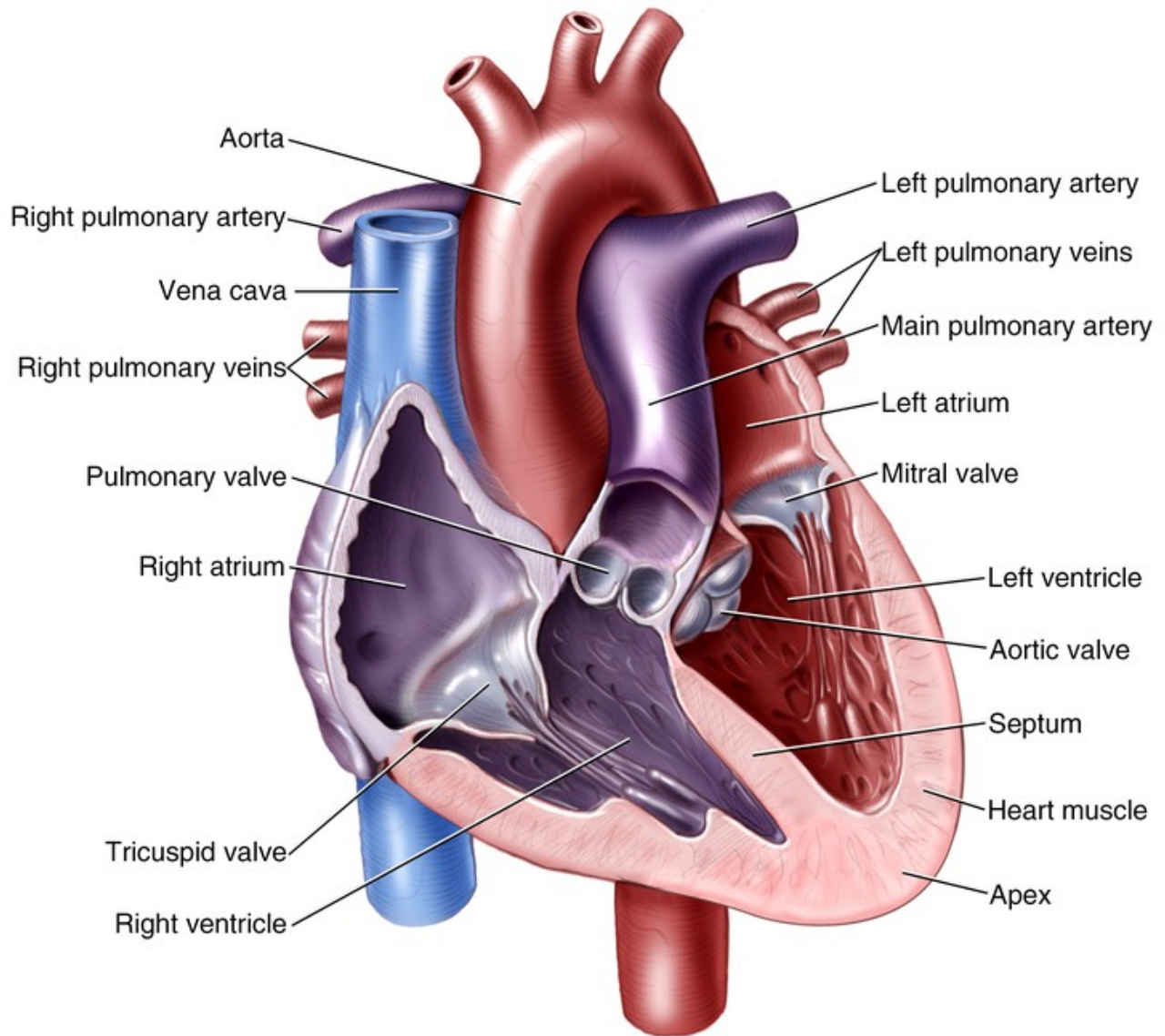
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Heart: External View



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Heart: Interior View



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