



# Congestive Heart Failure (CHF)

**Richard's 83-year-old father began experiencing fatigue and weakness,** as well as shortness of breath at night after getting into bed. His legs and ankles often were swollen, and his weight began to soar even with his sudden and unusual lack of appetite and feelings of nausea. And he was coughing more often.

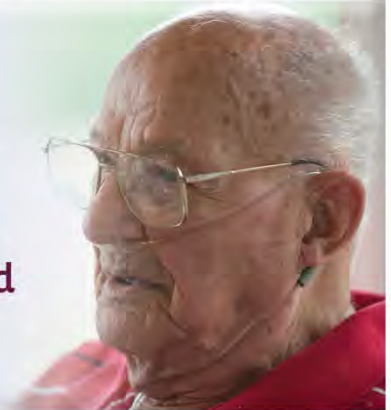
Richard finally persuaded his stubborn dad that it was time to go to the doctor. Tests resulted in a diagnosis that surprised both father and son: congestive heart failure. And the condition was bad enough to force hospitalization. Richard and his father knew about heart attacks. What, they asked, was congestive heart failure?

The doctors explained that congestive heart failure occurs when the heart is no longer able to pump blood throughout the body. According to the National Institutes of Health\*, the condition can be caused by narrowed arteries, high blood pressure, problems stemming from a heart attack or stroke, infection of the heart, as well as other factors. Congestive heart failure is a progressive disorder that not only affects the heart, but other organs such as the lungs and the kidneys.

The cardiologist told Richard and his father that aging plays a large role in the risk of congestive heart failure, and the prevalence of heart failure doubles approximately with each decade of life. As people live longer, the occurrence of heart failure rises, as well as other conditions that complicate its treatment.

When Richard's dad was ready to go home after a two-week hospital stay, he was surprised by the number of instructions he received that included medication, at-home exercises, a strict diet, orders for follow-up doctors' visits and other things. Doctors emphasized to Richard's family that congestive heart failure is one of the most common reasons for hospital readmissions. Their objective, of course, was to keep their father out of a hospital or care facility and in his home.

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The local Home Instead Senior Care® office stands ready to help a senior loved one, such as Richard's father, who is recovering from congestive heart failure at his home. Home Instead Senior Care can help a senior transition safely from the hospital or facility through the network's Returning Home<sup>SM</sup> Program.

\*<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/tutorials/congestiveheartfailure/ct129105.pdf>



**Returning Home<sup>SM</sup>**

\* Continued on back





## How a Home Instead CAREGiver can help

**Medication Reminders:** A CAREGiver can pick up prescriptions and refills, and oversee medication reminders to help reduce the risk of a medication mishap. A CAREGiver also could make a note of any reactions or side effects so they can be addressed during a doctor's appointment or, if needed, alert the doctor immediately.

**Nutrition Management:** Since diet is a major issue in dealing with congestive heart failure, a CAREGiver can help with grocery shopping and meal preparation. Eating a reduced-salt diet is important in managing issues such as swelling in the ankles and legs, and keeping weight down. Preparing meals for a client offers opportunities to interact as well as a chance to observe and record the client's food intake.

**Exercise and Daily Activities:** Congestive heart failure often will require a daily regime of simple at-home exercises to maintain health. A CAREGiver can remind and encourage a client to stay on schedule with exercises. Light housekeeping and assistance with bathing, dressing and toileting are other services that may be available.

**Excessive Emotional Stress or Depression:** It's not uncommon for a senior loved one to become anxious or depressed after returning from the hospital; in fact, experts link depression and heart disease. A CAREGiver's companionship can help with that aspect in the battle with congestive heart failure, and a CAREGiver can alert family members or the client's doctor if signs of depression appear.

**Keeping Records:** Many senior loved ones will be required to weigh in every morning before breakfast and record it in a diary that can be shown to a health care provider. A CAREGiver can be instrumental in helping a senior track important measurables such as weight, consistency of exercising and medication adherence. A CAREGiver also can recognize warning signs and symptoms, and alert family and physicians for conditions such as shortness of breath, weight gain, swelling of legs and ankles, and changes in activity level.

**Doctor Appointments:** Follow-ups with doctors are often required to ensure that an older adult manages his condition effectively. Trips to a cardiac rehabilitation program often are necessary. A CAREGiver can track scheduled appointments, prepare a client for the trip and provide transportation to wherever the senior loved one needs to go.



For more information contact your local  
Home Instead Senior Care<sup>®</sup> office at  
**888.484.5759**  
or visit **ReturningHome.com**