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## Heart Failure Stages

### Topic Overview

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The American College of Cardiology and the American Heart Association have devised a classification system for heart failure. It categorizes heart failure based on how the disease progresses in most people. This system is also followed in Canada. Under this system, heart failure is classified by stages A through D.<sup>1</sup>

## Stages of heart failure

Stage	Definition	Examples
A	Person is at high risk for developing heart failure. But there is no structural disorder of the heart.	Person has <u>high blood pressure</u> , <u>coronary artery disease</u> , <u>diabetes</u> , a history of <u>substance use disorder</u> , a personal history of <u>rheumatic fever</u> , or a <u>family history</u> of <u>cardiomyopathy</u> .
B	Person has a structural disorder of the heart. But the person has never had symptoms of heart failure.	Person has structural changes to the left ventricle, has heart valve disease, or has had a <u>heart attack</u> .
C	Person has past or current symptoms of heart failure. Symptoms are linked with underlying structural heart disease.	Person has shortness of breath or fatigue caused by structural heart disease. Or the person does not have symptoms and is getting treatment for prior symptoms of heart failure.
D	Person has end-stage disease. He or she needs specialized treatment strategies.	Person is often hospitalized for heart failure or cannot be safely discharged from the hospital. Or the person is in the hospital waiting for a heart transplant. Or the person is at home getting continuous intravenous support for symptom relief or being supported with a mechanical circulatory assistive device. Or the person is in a <u>hospice</u> setting for the management of heart failure.

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### **⚠ Is it an emergency?**

If you or someone in your care has chest pains, difficulty breathing, or severe bleeding, it could be a **life-threatening emergency**. Call **9-1-1** or the local emergency number immediately.

If you are concerned about a possible poisoning or exposure to a toxic substance, call **Poison Control** now at **1-800-567-8911**.