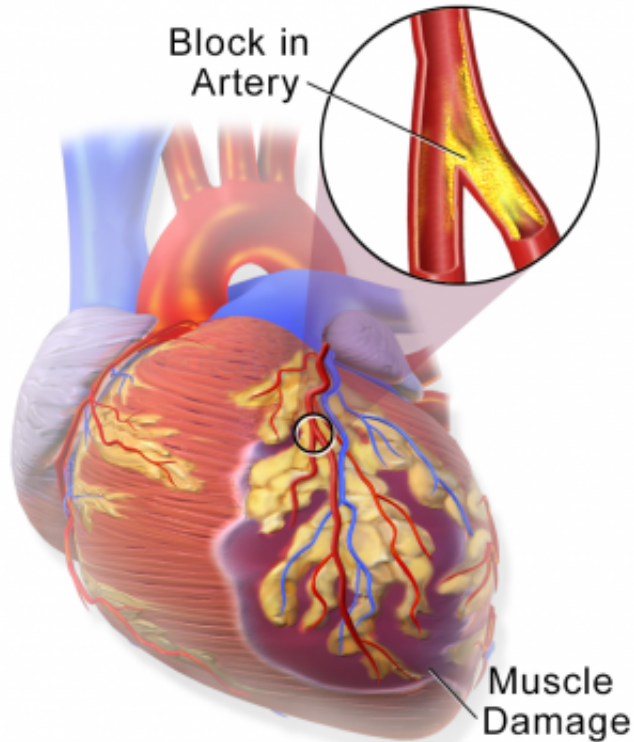


One in five people will develop heart failure

May 5 2015



Heart Attack

Myocardial Infarction or Heart Attack. Credit: Blausen Medical Communications/Wikipedia/CC-A 3.0

One person in five is expected to develop heart failure in developed countries, a disease with no cure but which is largely preventable. It feels as if every breath in and out is through a narrow straw. The Heart Failure Association of the European Society of Cardiology is calling for greater

public awareness of heart failure symptoms as countries across Europe hold events for Heart Failure Awareness Day on 8, 9 and 10 May.

Professor Andrew L Clark, chair of the British Society for Heart Failure (BSH), said: "For [patients](#) with untreated heart failure it feels as if every breath in and out is through a narrow straw. Their prognosis is worse than for most forms of cancer. But treatment at least doubles life expectancy and many cases could be prevented if patients knew what do to."

Heart failure is a life threatening disease that affects 26 million people worldwide and has a striking impact on quality of life. Patients are often scared, anxious and depressed. Those with breathlessness and [extreme fatigue](#) find work, travel and socialising difficult. Up to 45% of patients admitted to hospital with heart failure die within 1 year of admission and the majority die within 5 years.

Most types of heart failure are preventable and risk diminishes with a healthy lifestyle. After the disease has developed, premature deaths could be prevented if people were taught to recognise the symptoms and seek immediate medical attention.

The Heart Failure Matters website, http://www.heartfailurematters.org/en_GB, provides practical information for patients, families, and caregivers in 8 languages.

The principal warning signs of heart failure are:

- Increasing swelling of the legs, starting with ankles and working upward
- Getting more breathless, particularly lying flat or waking you at night.

Public awareness of [heart failure symptoms](#) is dangerously low. The risk of death increases when hospital treatment is delayed by just 4 to 6 hours after symptoms occur, but many patients do not contact a doctor for hours or even days despite obvious warning signs. Patients say they did not seek treatment immediately because they "did not think symptoms were heart related" or the symptoms were "not that severe at first". Most patients wrongly think heart failure is not serious or is a normal part of ageing.

A healthy lifestyle decreases the risk of heart failure. Being physically active, eating a healthy diet and not smoking all have positive effects and lower the likelihood of obesity, diabetes and high blood pressure, which are also risk factors for heart failure.

Heart Failure Awareness Day is celebrating its 5th anniversary in more than 25 ESC member countries, who each add their individual flavour to the campaign. The BSH has used Heart Failure Awareness Day to raise awareness amongst politicians, policy makers, patients and healthcare professionals of the impact of heart failure and the need for equal access to specialist services. Professor Clark said: "Most patients don't get to see a heart failure specialist. This needs to change because when patients are diagnosed quickly and given the best treatment, their chances of survival and a good quality of life dramatically improve."

Germany raised public awareness of heart failure through information days at 18 hospitals, a nationwide cycling tour, extensive print campaigns, and a design competition for schools on the theme "Take Heart!". Professor Stefan Störk, director of the Comprehensive Heart Failure Centre in Würzburg, Germany, said: "We hope that by targeting healthy people with prevention messages we can stop [heart failure](#) from occurring and avert unnecessary deaths and reductions in quality of life."

More information: Statistics about heart failure are available in the

HFA White Paper "Heart failure: preventing disease and death worldwide": www.escardio.org/communities/H...epaper-15-May-14.pdf

Provided by European Society of Cardiology

Citation: One in five people will develop heart failure (2015, May 5) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2015-05-people-heart-failure.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.