

Left ventricular failure—the silent condition that could be fatal

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Left ventricular dysfunction is the medical name for a weak heart pump. It's a condition that impacts about 9% of people over the age of 60. Paul Friedman, M.D., a cardiologist at Mayo Clinic in Rochester, explains the condition and how it can be diagnosed and treated.

Left ventricular dysfunction can be a silent and potentially deadly

condition.

"What's terribly important is it can be there without symptoms and can lead to bad things happening: death, shortness of breath, fainting hospitalization."

Dr. Friedman says if it's known, there are a lot of treatment options.

"There are a number of powerful treatments that help the heart pump regain its strength that prolong life," says Dr. Friedman.

Evidence suggests that the earlier the condition can be identified, the better.

"Our goal is to help people identify this condition if their circumstances put them at elevated risk."

And that doesn't necessarily mean going to a medical center for a screening test.

"What we've demonstrated is that you can screen for that condition just by checking an electrocardiogram (ECG) on your watch at home."

Some smartwatches are able to measure heart rhythm through an ECG.

"It's really startling to think about the fact that a consumer device that you buy at the store and wear on your wrist can identify the presence of a potentially asymptomatic and life-threatening condition," says Dr. Friedman.

Risk factors for left ventricular dysfunction include increasing age, diabetes, [high blood pressure](#) and certain medications.

Provided by Mayo Clinic

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