



Heart failure

Heart failure means that your heart is weakened and it isn't pumping as well as it should be. Since the heart is not pumping fast enough, your blood is essentially waiting in a queue or a line-up to get through the heart.

The blood can end up waiting in your lungs, and that extra fluid in the lungs can make you feel short of breath. This is often worse when you are lying down or walking up stairs.

If the blood waits in your legs (particularly during the day, when you are standing up), it can cause your legs to become swollen.

In the ER, this is often treated with furosemide (which is the same thing as Lasix). This medicine is a diuretic or a "water pill." It makes you pee out the extra fluid that was making it difficult to breathe.

If you were prescribed this medication to take at home after you left the ER, it is important that you follow up with your family doctor in the next week or so (as soon as possible) to adjust the dose as necessary.

Note that the water pill is just a short-term solution. There are very powerful medications which can help you improve your heart function in the long-term. Some of these medications have names that end in "pril" or "sartan" and "lol" and it is very important that you speak to your family doctor to see if these medications are right for you, if you aren't already on them.

Other things you can do are to limit your salt intake (no salty foods) and record your weight every day (take it at the same time each day). If your weight increases suddenly, this means that your body is keeping too much fluid and you should see your family doctor about this.

It is very important to follow-up with your family doctor, even if you are feeling better after leaving the ER.

Reasons to return to the ER

1. Chest pain or tightness
2. New fever (≥ 38.0 °C or 100.4 °F)
3. Worsening shortness of breath