

MaineHealth Learning Community

Practice Improvement Series

Tools of the Trade:

What are Your Patients Using to Manage Their Chronic Conditions?

“Learn the Lingo”

Most Commonly Used Terms for Heart Failure

- 1. Cardiomyopathy-** A weakness of the heart muscle, often leading to Heart Failure. It can be caused by a number of underlying disorders including coronary artery disease, valvular heart disease, viral infections, diabetes, alcoholism, or connective tissue disorders. Sometimes no specific cause can be identified, this is called “idiopathic”.
- 2. Ejection Fraction-** The ejection fraction (EF) is usually measured by performing an echocardiogram, an ultrasound of the heart, which may reveal a weak heart muscle, leaking or abnormal heart valves, or fluid around the heart. The EF measures the function of the left ventricle of the heart (LVEF). This is the percent of blood that is ejected with each heart beat. An LVEF of 60-85% is normal. Often with patients in heart failure this number is below 40%.
- 3. Atrial fibrillation-** An irregular heart rhythm caused by chaotic electric activity in the upper chambers of the heart. This rhythm, combined with a fast heart rate, can result in heart failure.
- 4. Ischemia-** Insufficient oxygen in a portion of the heart muscle, most commonly due to a blockage in a coronary artery, can result in heart failure.
- 5. CABG-** or “cabbage” as it is pronounced, is the acronym for **C**oronary **A**rtery **B**ypass **G**rafting, the surgery performed for patients with blocked coronary arteries.
- 6. Pulmonary Edema-** Usually caused by Heart Failure which results in fluid accumulation and swelling in the lungs. Fluid is pushed into the alveoli (air sacs) which results in a barrier to normal oxygen exchange, causing the patient severe shortness of breath. Symptoms may also include wheezing, gurgling sound with breathing, cough, anxiety, restlessness, or excessive seating.

7. ACE Inhibitor- A classification of medication often prescribed for the heart failure patient
This medication relaxes the blood vessels and makes it easier to pump.

8. New York Heart Classification- In order to determine the best course of therapy,
physicians often assess the patient in heart failure in relation to their symptoms to everyday
activities. The classification of patients is labeled Class I (mild) to Class IV (severe).