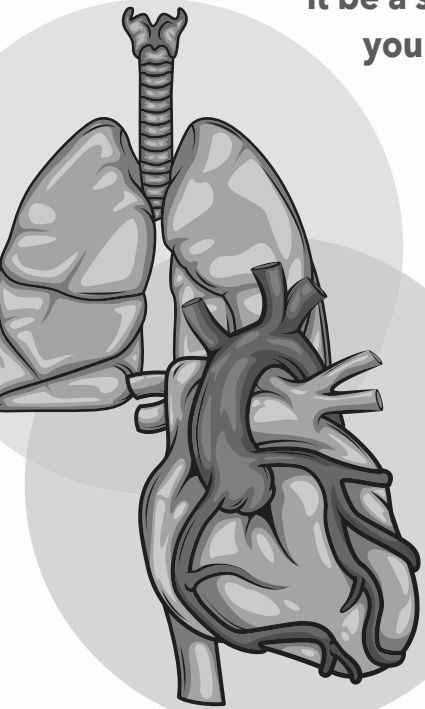


HEART FAILURE or LUNG DISEASE?

The scenario may be all too familiar: you're feeling ok as long as you're sitting down, but when you start moving around you're winded and can't catch your breath. You may also have a nagging cough, fatigue or swollen feet. Could it be a sign of heart problems? Or could it be your lungs that are causing the symptoms?



Your heart and lungs work together to supply your body's cells with oxygen. When you breathe, your lungs capture oxygen and move it into the blood. Part of your heart pumps this oxygen-rich blood out to your body. The other part of your heart receives the used blood back from your body - an efficient recycler - and pumps it to your lungs to pick up more oxygen.

The first step to figuring out whether your heart or lungs need tuning-up is to make an appointment with your Primary Care Physician (PCP) for an exam. This will give clues to the correct diagnosis, and testing can confirm it so your doctor can begin treating you. It's especially important to zero in on the source of your symptoms because some medications for heart failure may make lung problems worse, and some lung medications can stress the heart.

Tests your doctor may order to diagnose heart failure include a chest x-ray (CXR), an electrocardiogram (EKG), an echocardiogram and a stress test, as well as various blood tests. Lung tests may include pulmonary function tests (PFTs), a chest x-ray, spirometry, and blood testing.

Don't put off seeing your PCP if you think you might have heart or lung problems. The sooner you get in for an exam, the sooner you can be treated - and start to feel better!

