

The infant or child with HF may be acutely ill, and some may require intensive care until the symptoms improve. Expert nursing care is essential to reduce the cardiac demands that strain the failing heart muscle. During this time, the child and family require emotional support. Although the objectives of nursing care are the same, interventions differ depending on the child's age (see [Nursing Care Plan](#) box).

Nursing Care Plan

The Child with Heart Failure

Case Study

George is a 2-week-old male with congenital heart disease (CHD). At birth he initially showed no signs or symptoms but within the first week he developed symptoms of heart failure (HF). He was found to have coarctation of the aorta and is now under the care of the cardiology team and scheduled for surgery. George is experiencing more signs of HF and the care is now focused on preventing further symptoms before he goes to surgery.

Assessment

What are the most important signs of HF that you need to look for in a young infant?

Heart Failure Defining Characteristics

Tachycardia

Tachypnea

Ineffective peripheral circulation, cool extremities

Hypotension

Rapid, weak peripheral pulses

Prolonged capillary refill, longer than 2 or 3 seconds

Narrow pulse pressure