Fluid Around the Heart (Pericardial Effusion)
Patient Education

Pericardial effusion is the collection of too much fluid in the space around the heart. The fluid can collect slowly or very quickly.

Watch for the danger signals of this condition. Let your doctor or nurse know if you have:

- Shortness of breath.
- Cough.
- Chest pain or chest tightness.
- Feeling tired all the time.
- Swollen hands or feet.
- Feeling restless.
- A change in memory or feeling confused.

If you have these symptoms, your doctor may order an echocardiogram (ECHO), which is a machine that takes pictures of your heart. An x-ray of your chest and EKG may also be ordered. An EKG tells the doctor about your heartbeat. If the test shows that you have too much fluid around your heart, it may be necessary to remove the extra fluid around your heart.