

EJECTION FRACTION (EF) NUMBER

What it is

Your ejection fraction or “EF” is the percentage of blood that is pumped out of a filled ventricle during each beat (ejection). It essentially measures the capacity at which your heart is pumping and is used by doctors to diagnose and monitor heart failure and other heart diseases, or *cardiomyopathies*. A low EF is not always associated with symptoms, although many may experience arrhythmias (irregular heart rhythms), rapid heart beat (tachycardia), heart palpitations, shortness of breath or swelling of the lower legs and feet (edema). A low EF number can occur if your heart muscle has been damaged as a result of:

- Heart attack
- Long-term, uncontrolled blood pressure
- Heart valve problems
- Heart failure

A low EF number is a serious health risk. If you’re a heart patient with a low EF, you’re at significantly higher risk for sudden cardiac arrest (SCA). SCA is a very dangerous health risk because it strikes without warning and there are no symptoms. It is fatal if not treated with defibrillation within minutes. SCA kills more than 325,000 people every year.

Typical EF ranges are:

50-75%	Heart’s pumping ability is NORMAL
36-49%	Heart’s pumping ability is BELOW NORMAL
35% & Below	Heart’s pumping ability is LOW

What should you do?

- Ask your doctor if your EF should be measured.
- If your EF has been measured, ask for your EF number.
- If your EF is below normal or low (below 50%) ask your doctor if you should see a heart failure or heart rhythm specialist.
- Learn more about EF: A number of sites on the internet have great information about EF including www.EFnumber.com, www.insidecardiacarrest.com, and www.lifebeatonline.com.

How to get your EF measured

Ejection fraction is most commonly measured using an echocardiogram or ECG. It uses ultrasound to take a moving picture of your heart and can usually be performed at a doctor’s office, quickly and painlessly. Several alternative tests can be performed, including cardiac MRI and a computed tomography (CT) scan, among others. Your doctor will recommend the test that is best for you.

Keep in mind that your EF number is variable, so it’s important that you talk to your doctor about tracking it over time, just like you would with your blood pressure and cholesterol.

The Sudden Cardiac Arrest Association’s mission is to prevent loss of life from sudden cardiac arrest. We seek to increase awareness, encourage training for immediate bystander action, increase public access to defibrillation and promote the use of available medical devices and therapies, principally, implantable cardioverter defibrillators (ICD). SCAA members are the beneficiaries of improved science and medical technology, coupled with the wisdom and caring of thousands of physicians. For more information, please visit us at www.suddencardiacarrest.org