



LIVING WITH  
HEART FAILURE

## What is Heart Failure?

### Heart Failure Is Weakness of the heart

Sometimes, heart failure is also called: **congestive heart failure, pulmonary edema, fluid on lungs**

### Symptoms

Some of the symptoms (what you will be feeling) of heart failure are:

- **Having a hard time breathing**
- **Swollen ankles, legs, or belly/abdomen** (sometimes doctors call it “edema”)
- **Feeling weak and tired**

### Can Heart Failure Be Treated?

**YES!** Although heart failure is a chronic disease (it will never go away no matter how good you feel) it can be treated so that you can continue to live your life.

#### Heart Failure Can Be Treated with:

- **Medications**
- **Procedures**
- **Surgery**

Be sure to **talk to your doctor** to see what is the right kind of treatment for you.

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# 6 Steps for Managing Heart Failure

### What You Can Do

Patients, like you have an important part in keeping yourself feeling good and out of the hospital. People with heart failure can live happy lives for many years by following these 6 steps

1. Take the **medications** that your doctor gives you
2. Go to your **doctor's appointments**
3. Monitor (watch) your **symptoms** (how you feel) and **weight**
4. Adapt your **diet** (eating) and **fluids** (drinking)
5. Get **exercise** as directed
6. Limit your intake of **alcohol** and **caffeine** and **do not use tobacco**

### Step 1: Take Your Medications!

It is important that you always take your medications exactly as prescribed by your doctor.

Your medications may change after a doctor's appointment or hospital stay, so it is important to keep an up-to-date list. Bring this list to every appointment and share it with all of your healthcare providers.

**Taking your medications as directed can help you feel better, stay healthier, and reduce your risk of returning to the hospital.**

### Step 2: Go to Your Doctors Appointments

Going to all of your scheduled doctor's appointments is an important part of staying healthy. These visits give your healthcare team a chance to check your progress, review your medications, answer questions, and make changes to your care when needed.

Don't be afraid to talk to your doctor or other people in the office about any questions or concerns you may have. Always ask someone if you don't understand something, or if you feel something is "just not right." Your doctors and nurses are there to help and support you.

#### Tips to Follow:

- Set up your follow up appointment **before you leave** the hospital or other care facility
- Schedule doctor's appointments on the **best day and time** for you
- Make sure you **have a ride** to and from your appointments
- **GO TO ALL OF YOUR SCHEDULED APPOINTMENTS**
- Bring a **friend** or **family member**
- Bring **all medications** or a **medication list** to all doctor's appointments
- Don't be afraid to **ask questions!**

**Heart failure is not simple. The doctor needs to see you often to keep you well.**

## Step 3:

### Monitor Your Symptoms & Weight

Pay attention to how you feel each day and watch for any new or worsening symptoms. Keeping track of changes can help you know when to contact your doctor and help your healthcare team better manage your care.

#### Keep these things in mind:

- When your body holds extra fluid (water), your weight goes up
- Weight gain from fluid can start **up to two weeks** before you feel other symptoms
- By weighing yourself every day, you can keep track of your weight

#### Things you will need to do:

- Buy a scale if you don't already have one
- Make sure you can easily read the numbers on the scale
- Write your weight down **EVERY DAY** using provided charts or on a calendar
- Bring a weight chart to your doctor appointment

#### Remember to:

- Weigh yourself every morning at about the same time
- After urinating
- Before having anything to eat or drink
- Wearing the same amount of clothing
- Using the same scale
- Tell your doctor when you gain: **3 pounds** in one day OR **5 pounds** in one week

## Step 4:

### Adapt Diet and Fluids (What You Eat and Drink)

Salt is also called "SODIUM" and is found in most foods you eat.

#### Why do you need to limit the salt (sodium) in your diet?

- Salt acts like a sponge and makes your body hold onto water. Eating too much salt can cause weight gain, swelling in your legs, and fluid buildup in your lungs, making it harder to breathe.

#### How much salt (sodium) can you have each day?

- Doctors recommend that you eat less than 2000mg of salt each day. You can do this by taking the salt shaker off the table and watching which kinds of food you eat.

**SALT = SODIUM and SODIUM = SALT**

## Foods High in Salt

These foods should be avoided or limited:

- Canned foods/soups
- Frozen dinners
- Deli meats
- Hot dogs
- Jar tomato/pasta sauce
- Pickles
- Sausages and Kielbasa
- Potato chips
- Ham and Bacon
- French fries
- Sea salt
- Adobo seasoning
- Salad dressings
- Cheeses
- Soy sauce

## Tips To Keep You Eating Healthy:

If you do eat salt, tell your doctor:

- Medications may need to be adjusted
- More doctor visits may be needed
- You may need to talk with a diet specialist, commonly called a dietitian

If you eat out, choose heart healthy foods. A few suggestions are:

- Order baked or broiled foods (chicken, fish and steamed vegetables)
- Ask for a salad dressing, sauce or gravy on the side

## Drinking Too Many Fluids?

Most people with heart failure can drink normal amounts of fluid. Do not restrict your fluids unless you are told to do so by your doctor.

**By staying away from salt and watching your fluid intake in your diet, you can live longer, feel better, and spend less time in the hospital.**

## Step 5: Exercising & Keeping Active

In general, exercising, having sex and driving are OK.

Make sure to talk to your doctor about what kind of exercise is safe or good for you.

### Tips to follow for exercising and having sex:

- Follow the treatment plan your doctor gives you
- Wait at least 1 hour after eating before exercising or having sex
- Stop and rest for a while if you get tired or have a problem
- Pace yourself
- Choose a time when you feel your best

## Step 6: Limit Alcohol & Caffeine, Do NOT Use Tobacco

### Alcohol

If you are allowed to drink alcohol, have no more than:

- 2 drinks a day (for men)
- 1 drink a day (for women)

One drink is:

- 1 ½ shot glasses of 80 proof or 1 shot glass of 100 proof alcohol
- 5 oz glass of wine
- 12 oz bottle of beer

**Alcohol can make your heart failure worse. It can also affect your medicines.**

### Caffeine

Caffeine is usually OK in moderation (always check with your doctor). If allowed, have no more than: **1 or 2 cups** per day

### Tobacco Use

If you smoke (cigarettes or cigars), please **STOP!**

- It is bad for anyone, but especially for those with heart failure
- It makes the heart work harder
- It can lead to heart attacks

Ask your doctor or nurse about help to quit smoking



## LIVING WITH HEART FAILURE

# Planning for the Future

### Some things to keep in mind to plan for the future:

A legal document called an Advanced Directive or Living Will can help your family and medical team in medical emergencies if you are unable to make known your wishes. Everyone should have Advanced Directives.



### An Advanced Directive can include:

- A “medical durable power of attorney” (someone you name to make medical decisions when you cannot)
- Cardiopulmonary (CPR) instructions or Do Not Resuscitate (DNR)

Many states have free templates on the internet for creating your own advanced directive or living will. You can also speak with an attorney about it.

**Talk with your family and your doctor about your feelings and care wishes.**

### Remember These 6 Steps To STAYING HEALTHY!

1. Take the **medications** that your doctor gives you
2. Go to your **doctor’s appointments**
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4. Adapt your **diet** (eating) and **fluids** (drinking)
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**Patients who follow these steps live longer, feel better, and spend less time in the hospital.**

