

Living with Heart Failure



What is heart failure?

Heart failure means your heart is not pumping blood as well as it should. It does **not** mean your heart is about to stop working. It means your heart muscle has become weak or stiff.

When this happens, your heart loses power. You may have the following symptoms:

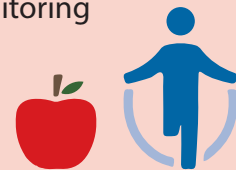
- fluid build-up in your legs or belly
- shortness of breath with walking, getting dressed, or sleeping
- cough
- weight gain
- fatigue
- rapid heart beat
- chest pain
- dizziness

Treating heart failure can help you:

- do normal daily activities easier
- reduce symptoms
- stay out of the hospital
- live longer

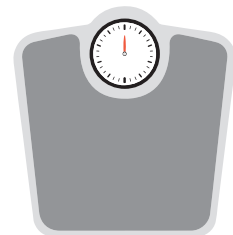
Heart failure cannot be cured but it can be managed by:

- self-care and monitoring
- lifestyle changes
- medicines
- diet



Self-care and monitoring

- Weigh yourself every morning, after you urinate and before you eat breakfast. Wear the same type of clothing each time you weigh yourself.
- Always use the same scale. Place it on a hard, flat surface.
- Record your weight daily in a notebook or calendar.
- Watch for weight gain or loss. See the last section, "Heart failure self-care," for more information.
- Ask your provider what your "dry weight" should be. Your dry weight is when your body has the right amount of fluid, not too much or too little.



My dry weight is: _____

Lifestyle changes



- **Exercise**—Being more physically active may help you feel better. Ask your healthcare provider which activities or exercises are safe for you.



- **Quit smoking or vaping**—Smoking can worsen your heart failure and cause lung problems. Talk with your healthcare provider about ways to quit.



- **Weight**—If you are overweight, losing weight can reduce the stress on your heart. It can also help you feel better. Talk to your healthcare provider about ways to lose weight.



- **Avoid drugs and alcohol**—Drugs such as cocaine, methamphetamine, marijuana, and heroin can damage your heart and will make your heart failure worse. Drinking alcohol may prevent your medicines from working as they should. Alcohol may also make your symptoms worse.



- **Vaccines**—Remember to get a flu shot every year. Talk with your healthcare provider about other vaccines you may need to help keep you healthy.

Medicines

Medicines for heart failure can help you feel better. You can do more activities, stay out of the hospital and you may live longer. More than one medicine may be prescribed by your healthcare provider.

ACE Inhibitors, ARBs, or sacubitril/valsartan	Beta-blockers	Spirolactone or eplerenone	Empagliflozin or dapagliflozin
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ lower blood pressure ▪ relax blood vessels ▪ help your heart work easier 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ lower heart rate ▪ lower blood pressure ▪ help your heart work better 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ lower blood pressure ▪ strengthen your heart 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ lower blood pressure ▪ help your kidneys

Other medicines you may be taking to help your heart include:

- isosorbide dinitrate and hydralazine
- ivabradine
- fish oil
- vericiguat
- digoxin



Avoid over-the-counter pain medicines such as ibuprofen (Motrin®, Advil®), naproxen (Aleve®) or prescribed medications such as celecoxib or meloxicam. Take aspirin only if recommended by your healthcare provider. Acetaminophen (Tylenol®) is a safer choice for pain or fever.

It is important to tell your healthcare provider about all medicines, vitamins, and supplements you take. Do not stop your medicines. Discuss any side effects or problems you might be having with your medicine.

Diet

A diet high in salt (sodium) can cause your body to hold onto water. This can make your symptoms worse. A high-salt diet can also cause swelling, weight gain, and shortness of breath. Eating less salt is one of the most important things to help your heart failure.

Avoid adding salt to your food

Eat these...	Not these...
Pepper, garlic, onion, chives, red pepper flakes, cumin, oregano, basil, thyme, mint, or lemon.	Salt, garlic salt, or pre-mixed seasonings that contain salt.
Lean meats such as chicken and fish.	Processed meats like lunch meat, ham, or hot dogs.
Fresh fruits and vegetables, oatmeal, or whole grains (such as brown rice or whole-wheat pasta).	Pre-packaged frozen dinners, fast food, canned foods and vegetables, salty snacks such as chips, salted nuts, pickles, or olives.



Salt substitutes may contain potassium and may not be safe with your medicines. Talk with your healthcare provider before using salt substitutes.

- Read labels for sodium content.
- Serving size: how much is in the serving?
- Servings per container: how many servings are in the **entire** package?
- Sodium content: how much salt is in **each** serving?

My daily sodium intake goal is: _____

Your provider may suggest that you limit how much fluid you drink each day. Keep track of the fluid you drink by:

- Recording all fluids you drink during the day and night
OR
- Mark a container with the amount of fluid you are allowed for the day. Each time you drink, pour an equal amount into the container. When the container is filled, you have reached your daily limit.

My daily fluid intake goal is: _____

No Sodium Added Soup	
Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size: 1 cup (240g)	
Servings Per Container: 2	
Ar	
Ca	
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 50mg	2%
Total Carb 18g	6%
50 mg x 2 = 100 mg sodium in the entire can	
5%	
Vitamin A 45%	Vitamin C 20%
Calcium 4%	Iron 8%

Heart failure self-care

Dry weight goal: _____

Green is great!	Green means your heart failure is under control.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ "Dry weight" has not gone up or down by 3 pounds in one day. ■ Breathing is normal or comfortable. ■ Feet, ankles, and stomach are not swollen. ■ No chest pain. ■ Able to do usual activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Continue taking medicines. ■ Check your weight daily. ■ Limit salt intake and keep fluids consistent. ■ Keep all medical appointments.
Yellow is CAUTION. Action is needed to prevent an emergency.	Yellow means CALL or TALK with your healthcare team.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Weight gain of 3 or more pounds from "dry weight" in one day or 5 pounds in a week. ■ New cough. ■ Feet, ankle, legs, and stomach swelling has worsened. ■ Less energy or feeling tired. ■ Hard to breathe when you are lying down. ■ Feeling dizzy or lightheaded. ■ Feeling irregular or unusual heart beats. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Call your VA Nurse Care Manager or healthcare team. Write the contact number here: _____ _____ ■ Outside of clinic hours call: _____ _____
Red is EMERGENCY!	Red means GET HELP immediately!
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Short of breath or struggling to breathe. ■ Feeling very light-headed or like you are going to faint or pass out. ■ Having new chest pain or pressure. ■ Chest pain is not relieved by 3 nitroglycerin tablets. ■ Rapid or racing heartbeat with dizziness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Call 9-1-1. ■ Have someone drive you to the nearest emergency room and tell them you are a VA patient. ■ When you go home, contact your VA healthcare team.

My medicines

ACE Inhibitors, ARBs, or sacubitril/valsartan	Beta-blockers	Spironolactone or eplerenone	Empagliflozin or dapagliflozin
I am taking:	I am taking:	I am taking:	I am taking:

Diuretics (water pills) help remove extra fluid and reduce symptoms.

I am taking: _____

Daily sodium intake goal: _____

Daily fluid intake goal: _____

CONTACT INFORMATION: