

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 the muscles in your heart have become weaker or more stiff.

When this happens, your heart loses power and you may feel the following symptoms:

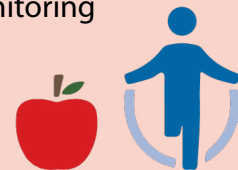
- Fluid build-up in your legs or belly
- Shortness of breath with walking, getting dressed, or sleeping
- Cough
- Weight gain
- Fatigue
- Rapid heart beat
- Chest pain
- Dizziness

Treating heart failure can:

- Allow you to more easily do normal daily activities
- Reduce symptoms
- Help keep you out of the hospital

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.
- Use the same scale every day. Place it on a hard, flat surface.
- Record your weight every day in a notebook or calendar.
- Watch for weight gain or loss. See the next section, Heart Failure Self-Care, for more information.
- Ask your provider what your “dry weight” should be. This is your weight when your body does not have either too much fluid or too little fluid.



My dry weight is: _____

Heart Failure Self-Care

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 medication. ■ Check your weight daily. ■ Limit fluid and salt intake. ■ 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 Case Manager or your VA 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 heart beat 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.

Lifestyle Changes



- **Exercise**—Being more physically active may help you feel better. Ask your provider what kinds of activity or exercise are safe and possible for you to do.



- **Quit smoking**—Smoking can worsen your heart failure and cause lung problems. Talk with your 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 provider about ways to lose weight.

Lifestyle Changes *(continued)*



- **Avoid drugs and alcohol**— Drugs such as cocaine, 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 provider about other vaccines you may need to help keep you healthy.

Medicines

Medicines for heart failure can help you feel better, allow you to do more activities, keep you out of the hospital, and may help you live longer. Your doctor may prescribe more than one medication if you need it based on your heart failure symptoms.

Beta-blockers	ACE Inhibitors or ARBs	Diuretics (Water Pills)
Lower heart rate. Lower blood pressure. Help your heart work better. May help you live longer.	Lower blood pressure. Relax blood vessels. Help your heart work easier. May help you live longer.	Remove extra fluid. Help reduce symptoms.
I am taking:	I am taking:	I am taking:

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

- Spironolactone or eplerenone
- Ivabradine
- Isosorbide dinitrate and hydralazine
- Digoxin
- Sacubitril/valsartan
- Fish oil



Avoid over-the-counter pain medicines such as ibuprofen (Motrin®, Advil®), or naproxen (Aleve®). Take aspirin only if your healthcare provider says it is okay. 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. Talk to your healthcare provider about any side effects you feel, or any difficulties 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 you can do.

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 and 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. You can keep track of the fluid you drink by:

- Recording all the fluid that you drink that day
- 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	Trans Fat 0g
Ci	Cholesterol 0mg
	Sodium 50mg
	Total Carb 18g
	50 mg x 2 = 100 mg sodium in the entire can
	Vitamin A 45%
	Calcium 4%
	Vitamin C 20%
	Iron 8%

CONTACT INFORMATION: