

Heart Failure:

What you need to know

Staying Healthy with Heart Failure

Even though you have heart failure, you can have a comfortable and active life at home by managing your symptoms each day. A few simple changes can help you stay healthy and help keep you out of the hospital.

It is very important to follow the directions your nurse or doctor may have given you on how to stay healthy at home.

What Do I Do Now?



STOP

Call **911** if you have:

- Chest pain
- Severe dizziness
- Shortness of breath

Call your nurse or doctor if you:

- Gain 2 to 3 pounds within 24 hours or 5 pounds in a week
- Have more trouble sleeping and cannot lie flat
- Notice increased swelling in your legs, feet, or ankles



SLOW

Call your nurse or doctor if your symptoms get worse:

- More shortness of breath when you are active
- Pain or swelling in your belly
- Trouble sleeping
- Dry, hacking cough



GO

Make sure you:

- Keep a record of your daily weight
- Take all your medicines as directed
- Eat a low-sodium diet
- Ask your doctor or nurse any questions you have about your health
- Stay active and enjoy your life
- Go to all your follow-up appointments.
Your next appointment is _____
with _____.

Resources and Medicines

It is important to work with your health care team so that you stay as healthy as possible.

Important Phone Numbers

- Call **911** if you experience **chest pain, severe dizziness, or shortness of breath.**
- My primary doctor: _____
- My cardiologist: _____
- My pharmacy: _____
- My heart failure nurse: _____
- My family contacts: _____

- My cardiac rehab (if available): _____

Other resources:

- Home health/home care: _____
- Heart failure nurse navigator, nurse care manager, case manager, coach: _____

- Social worker: _____
- Transportation resources: _____
- Oxygen therapy resources: _____

My Medicines

When you leave the hospital, you will be given a list of your medicines. Make certain to follow the instructions for each medicine.

- Take all your medicines every day and at the same time as prescribed.
 - ♦ If you forget to take your medicine, do not double up. Call your nurse or doctor for instructions to get back on track.
 - ♦ Store your medicine in a safe and convenient (or visible) place.
 - ♦ Do not share your medicines with other people.
 - ♦ Share your list of medicines with your regular nurse or doctor.

It is also important to follow other instructions from your nurse or doctor, such as getting a flu or pneumonia shot.



Activity, Weight, and Mood

My Daily Activity

- Get moving and be physically active every day. Your goal is 30 minutes of activity each day.
 - ♦ Include periods of rest between your activities.
 - ♦ Many patients benefit from taking part in a cardiac rehab program. Ask your doctor or nurse if there is a program in your area.
- Get 7 to 8 hours of sleep every night.
 - ♦ Use pillows to help you sit up to breathe and sleep better.
 - ♦ Consider sleeping upright in a lounge chair to be more comfortable.



My Food Choices and Weight

- Weigh yourself at the same time each day. Keep track of your weight on a tracking sheet or app.
 - ♦ Contact your doctor or nurse if you gain 2 to 3 pounds in 24 hours or 5 pounds in a week.
- Check the amount of salt you eat each day.
 - ♦ Many people are surprised to know there is a lot of salt in breads, cheese, and canned or packaged foods.
 - ♦ Aim to eat fresh fruits and vegetables, which are low in salt.
 - ♦ Use fresh herbs to season your food, which add flavor without a lot of salt.

My Mood

Having heart failure may affect your mood. If you feel that your mood is changing, use the list below to check the feelings you are having. **If you check two or more**, it is important to call your nurse or doctor to discuss your feelings.

In the past 2 weeks, I have...

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Felt low in spirits or sad | <input type="checkbox"/> Had a hard time concentrating |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Had little interest in my daily activities | <input type="checkbox"/> Felt very restless |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Felt tired or like I didn't have much energy or strength | <input type="checkbox"/> Been more quiet than usual |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Felt less self-confident | <input type="checkbox"/> Had trouble sleeping at night |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Had feelings of guilt | <input type="checkbox"/> Been less interested in eating |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Felt that life is not worth living | <input type="checkbox"/> Been eating more than usual |

Looking Ahead

You can feel a lot better and enjoy everyday activities when you make healthy changes.

1. **Keep track of your weight and breathing symptoms.**
2. **Learn more about heart failure.** You can find more information here:
 - American Heart Association: Rise Above Heart Failure: heart.org/en/health-topics/heart-failure
 - AARP Care Giving: aarp.org/caregiving/
 - American Association of Heart Failure Nurses: aahfn.org/mpage/patiented
 - Heart Failure Society of America: hfsa.org/patient/
 - PCNA: pcna.net/heart-failure-patients
3. **If you smoke, quit.**
 - a. Ask your nurse or doctor for help.
 - b. Call your state quitline at **800-QUIT-NOW (800-784-8669)**.
 - c. Visit smokefree.gov.
4. **Limit the amount of salt you eat.**
 - a. This will help lower your chance of swelling and will make breathing easier.
5. **Be active every day.**
6. **Talk with someone if you are feeling sad or overwhelmed.**
7. **Talk with your nurse or doctor about your heart failure.**
 - a. Your heart failure can get worse if it is not treated.
 - b. Telling your provider about symptoms that are getting worse can help keep you from going to the hospital.



These simple actions will help you live a healthy and active life with heart failure.

Heart Failure Terms

These are some terms you may hear when your nurse or doctor talks about heart failure. Be sure to ask if you have questions.

Cardiac rehabilitation, cardiac rehab: A program of monitored exercise for people with heart failure

Classification of heart failure: A rating of 1 to 4 used to describe your heart function and symptoms

Echocardiogram: This is also called an echo. It is an ultrasound test that uses sound waves to measure how well your heart is pumping.

Edema: Swelling, or fluid collecting, in your legs or belly

Ejection fraction: A measurement of how well your heart is pumping. An echocardiogram is used to determine this measurement.

Electrocardiogram (EKG or ECG): This test measures the electrical activity of your heart.

Myocardial infarction: A “heart attack” or blockage of a coronary (heart) artery

Ventricles: These are the two lower chambers of your heart. They pump blood to your lungs and to your body.