

What is heart failure?

Heart failure means your heart is weak. It may have trouble pumping blood. It can be caused from:

- Heart problems
- High blood pressure
- Heart attacks

How does it feel?

- Tired or weak
- Swelling in feet and legs
- Trouble breathing
- Waking up short of breath
- Having to sleep propped up with pillows to breath
- Can't catch breath
- Weight gain
- Coughing or wheezing
- Fast or uneven heartbeat

What to do about it?

- Take your medicines
- Keep your doctor appointments
- Eat less salt (sodium)
- Check your weight everyday
- Stay active
- Stay healthy
- Learn about oxygen equipment
- Know when to call the doctor

By following your doctor's advice, you can live a full and active life with heart failure!

Medicines can keep you healthy and strong.

Some pills:

- Make your heart beat stronger
- Relax blood vessels
- Lower blood pressure
- Get rid of fluid

Take your medicine EVERY DAY!
Skipping doses can be DANGEROUS!

Talk to your doctor or pharmacist before taking any medicine you buy from a store.



Stay active

Exercise can:

- Improve blood flow
- Make your heart and body stronger
- Increase your energy level
- Reduce stress
- Make you feel better

Good rules to follow:

- ALWAYS talk to your doctor before starting an exercise program
- DO NOT lift heavy weights
- Take breaks often
- Avoid hot and cold weather

Good things to eat:

Fresh fruits	fish
Fresh or Frozen vegetables	unsalted pretzels
Fresh meat, chicken	yogurt
Unsalted nuts	

Foods to Avoid

Eating too much salt (sodium) makes the body hold onto fluid. This makes the heart work even harder.

Avoid salt (sodium)

- Read food labels
- Buy food that is “sodium-free” or “low-sodium:
- Do not eat foods with more than 400mg of sodium per serving
- Do not use the salt shaker

Avoid foods with a lot of sodium:

- Ham/bacon/sausage
- Canned Soup
- Canned tomato juice
- Macaroni and cheese
- Dill pickles
- Lunch meat
- Canned vegetables
- Spaghetti sauce
- Frozen dinners
- Gravy
- Potato chips and pretzels

Also avoid fatty foods and drinks with caffeine.

When to call the doctor:

- Sudden tightness of clothes
- Weight gain of 2-3 pounds in one day
- Weight gain of 5 pounds in one week
- More trouble breathing
- Unusual coughing – especially at night
- Leg swelling (even after legs are elevated)

Some problems can be side effects of the medicine:

- Nausea or vomiting
- Vision problems
- Leg cramps
- Slow heartbeat

Call 911 if you:

- Have chest pain
- Can't breathe
- Are too dizzy to stand up
- Have chest pain that spreads to your arm, jaw, or back
- Have sudden weakness or paralysis

Stay healthy

- If you smoke – STOP!
- Talk about your feelings
- Get plenty of rest
- Get a flu shot every year
- Avoid alcohol
- Stay away from people with colds and flu
- Wash your hands frequently
- Maintain a healthy weight

Ways to prevent swelling:

- Take your medicine
- Eat less salt
- Sit with your legs raised
- Wear special elastic stockings (your doctor can recommend a size)
- Walk regularly

More information?

Your local hospital or clinic
American Heart Association

- 1-800-242-8721
- www.americanheart.org

CHF-C,EX,FU, L,LA,M,N

Heart Failure



What to know at home

Your next appointment: _____

Limit your fluid intake to: _____

Limit your sodium intake to: _____

Weigh yourself EVERYDAY.
Same time & same amount of clothes

Your current weight: _____

Report any sudden weight gains

Your oxygen flow rate is: _____