

Quick Guide To Managing Heart Failure

You are being treated for heart failure. The information in this quick guide will help you better understand heart failure.

This guide also includes things that you and your health care team can do together to help you feel better.

The goal of your treatment is to make you feel better and make you live longer.

By following your lifestyle and medicine plan, your quality of life should improve. Your heart may even work better.

Heart Failure

Heart failure means that your heart is not working correctly. The main job of your heart is to pump blood to your body. It is like a pump that pumps water out of a pool. If the pump is weak, not all of the water can be removed. Some of the water stays in the pool.

When your heart is weak, it can't pump the blood as well as it should. Parts of your body can hold extra fluid that isn't being moved very well by your heart.

Fluid build-up in your lungs can cause shortness of breath when you walk, go up stairs or lie down. Fluid build-up in your stomach can cause upset stomach after eating, bloating or swelling.

There are two types of heart failure:

- your heart can't fill up with as much as it should
- your heart can't squeeze out as much blood as it should.

In both cases, your heart isn't pumping enough oxygen-rich blood, and fluid is backing up in your lungs and stomach.

Causes of Heart Failure

There are a lot of causes of heart failure. Some of the common causes are:

- heart attack
- heart valve problems
- high blood pressure
- kidney failure
- irregular heartbeat
- viral infections (that attack the heart)
- chemotherapy and radiation therapy (to treat cancer)
- pregnancy-related (rare condition that can occur in the third trimester of pregnancy or the first few months after giving birth)
- alcohol use (in large amounts)
- street drug use (such as cocaine or heroin)
- genetic (runs in families)
- obesity (being overweight)
- diabetes.

Treating Heart Failure

You and your health care team will create a treatment plan together. Treating heart failure is done to:

- keep the amount of fluid in your body at a level that your heart can handle
- start or increase medicines that help your heart pump better.

The goal of treatment is to make you feel better and live longer. Your treatment plan may include:

- taking medicines
- eating healthful foods
- getting regular exercise
- reducing your stress.

By following your treatment plan, it is possible that you can have a good quality of life for many years!

Maintain a Healthy Weight

Each person has a different amount of fluid his or her heart can handle. In general, most patients have too much fluid and need to lose that fluid weight.

Your health care provider will recommend a healthy weight for you. If you do not lose the fluid:

- you will not feel better
- your medicines won't work as well.

Find Your 'Dry Weight'

Your "dry" weight is your goal weight. This is how much you weigh when you do not have extra fluid (water) build-up in your body.

Weigh Yourself Every Morning

To maintain the right amount of fluid in your body, you need to weigh yourself each morning.

- Weigh yourself without clothes.
- Weigh yourself after you go to the bathroom and before you eat or drink anything.
- Use the same scale.
- Write down your weight and symptoms in the Heart Failure Weight Log calendar.

You have fluid weight if you gain:

- 3 pounds in 1 day
- or
- 5 pounds in 1 week.

To lose the extra fluid weight, follow your health care provider's directions.

Watch How Much You Drink

Do not drink more than 2 liters of liquids each day. This includes water, milk, tea, coffee, soda, ice cream and soup.

Remember: you need more fluid coming out each day than what goes in. To maintain your weight, the amount of liquids going in each day has to equal what is coming out.

Limit How Much Salt You Eat

Limit your sodium (salt) to 1,500 to 2,000 milligrams (mg) each day.

- Sodium causes your body to retain (keep) water.
- If you eat more than 2,000 mg a day, your water pills won't work right or maybe not at all.

Remember: low salt does not mean no salt. Your heart needs salt to work right. Without any salt, you also will not feel well.

Take Your Medicines as Directed

There are five types of medicines that work to either improve heart failure or your quality of life. The goal is for you to be on more than two of them at the highest possible doses. The higher dose you can take, the more likely your heart failure will get better.

- **angiotensin receptor blockers (ARBs):** They relax your blood vessels so your heart pumps easier. You would be prescribed this if you cannot take an ACE inhibitor. Examples are losartan (Cozaar[®]), valsartan (Diovan[®]) and candesartan (Atacand[®]).
- **beta blockers:** They can improve how your heart works. Examples are carvedilol (Coreg[®]), metoprolol (Lopressor[®], Toprol XL[®]), bisoprolol (Zebeta[®]).
- **angiotensin converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors:** They allow your heart to pump easier. Examples enalapril (Vasotec[®]), captopril (Capoten[®]), lisinopril (Zestril[®] and Prinivil[®]), quinipril (Accupril[®]) ramipril (Altace[®]). If you can't take ACE inhibitors, you will take an ARB.
- **hydralazine and nitrates:** Together, they relax your blood vessels and decrease how hard your heart has to work to pump blood. Examples are hydralazine (Apresoline[®]), isosorbide dinitrate (Isordil[®]), isosorbide mononitrate (IMDUR[®]) or hydralazine/isosorbide dinitrate combination tablet (Bidil[®]).

You may take these if you are already taking the highest doses of beta blockers and ACE inhibitors, or if you can't take ACE inhibitors or ARBs.

- **aldosterone antagonists:** They block the effects of the stress hormone aldosterone. When your body makes too much aldosterone, it causes your kidneys keep more sodium and water. Examples are spironolactone (Aldactone®), eplerenone (Inspra®).

Get Regular Exercise

Exercise is good for heart failure. The more you exercise, the better your muscles get at pulling the oxygen out of your blood. This means your heart won't have to work as hard.

Push yourself and do a little more walking each day. Your goal is to walk at least 30 minutes each day.

Cardiac rehab can improve your quality of life. Talk with your health care provider for more information.

Consider Quitting Tobacco Products

Did You Know

Smokeless tobacco affects your heart in much the same way as cigarettes. Changing to smokeless tobacco is not a good way to protect your health. The best thing to do for your heart health is to quit all tobacco products.

People who smoke cigarettes are 2 to 4 times more likely to develop heart disease than people who do not smoke. Their risk for heart attack, stroke and circulatory problems also increases.

How tobacco affects you

Tobacco:

- damages and narrows blood vessels
 - This can lead to infections and risk for stroke.
- increases blood pressure
 - This can lead to stroke or heart disease.
- makes your blood vessels and arteries “sticky,” which can block blood flow
 - This raises your risks for heart disease, kidney disease, retinopathy (eye disease that causes blindness) and nerve damage.
- increases insulin resistance
 - This can raise your blood glucose and lead to diabetes.

Not Ready to Quit? Consider Taking a Break!

If quitting tobacco seems like too much right now, consider taking a break or a vacation from tobacco use.

This can help you feel better by restoring balance*.

- Set a goal to stop using tobacco.
- Talk with your doctor for resources or ways to cope with withdrawal symptoms.

If this goes well, maybe you will take more breaks during the year. This could lead to a tobacco-free life!

*Follow your doctor's directions for medicine, exercise, diet and other activities.

Benefits of quitting

- Your body responds quickly to quitting:
 - **8 hours:** The carbon monoxide level in your blood drops to normal. The oxygen level in your blood increases to normal.
 - **24 hours:** Your chance of heart attack decreases.
 - **48 hours:** Nerve endings start to grow again.
 - **2 weeks:** Your circulation improves and your lung function increases. (Source: World Health Organization)
- There are many health benefits to quitting. Quitting:
 - lowers your chances of stroke, heart disease and nerve damage
 - may lower your blood pressure.

Suggestions for quitting tobacco

Studies show that the most successful way to quit uses counseling, medicines and follow-up. Ask your health care provider for more information.

- Prepare to stop.
 - Get support from family and friends.
 - Avoid places where you know you will want to use tobacco.
 - Plan activities to replace using tobacco.
- Choose a day to stop.
 - Get rid of cigarettes, ashtrays and lighters.
- Stop.
 - Stop on the day you planned to stop.
 - Be careful with situations or activities in which you might be tempted to start using tobacco again.
 - Try to keep your focus on today, not the future. Tell yourself, "I am not smoking today."
- Stay stopped.
 - Think positive thoughts. Remember why you decided to stop. Reward yourself.
 - Remember that your craving will pass whether you smoke or not.
 - Do not play games like telling yourself, "One cigarette won't hurt," "I deserve a dip or chew," "I just want to see how a cigarette tastes." Your brain might tell you these things to persuade you to go back to tobacco.



Product-specific Resources

- Chantix[®] GetQuit Support plan
 - 1-877-CHANTIX (1-877-242-6849)
 - get-quit.com
- financial aid for Chantix[®] or Nicotrol[®] inhaler
 - 1-866-706-2400
 - pfizerrxpathways.com
- Plant Extracts aromatherapy
 - 1-877-999-4236

***There may be a cost to you. Check with your insurance provider.**

Resources for quitting

Allina Health

- Tobacco Intervention Program at Abbott Northwestern Hospital
 - 612-863-1648
- Tobacco Intervention Program at Mercy Hospital
 - 763-236-8008
- Tobacco Intervention Program at River Falls Area Hospital
 - 715-307-6075
- *United Hospital Lung and Sleep Clinic Tobacco Cessation Program
 - 651-726-6200
- *Penny George[™] Institute for Health and Healing (LiveWell Center) tobacco intervention coaching
 - 612-863-5178

Other

- Quit Partner
 - 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669) or quitpartnermn.com
 - American Indian: 1-833-9AI-QUIT or aiquit.com
 - Spanish: 1-855-DEJELO-YA (1-855-335-3569) or quitpartnermn.com/es
 - Teens: text "Start My Quit" to 1-855-891-9989 or call to talk with a coach
- Minnesota Department of Health
 - health.state.mn.us/quit
- online tobacco cessation support
 - smokefree.gov
- American Lung Association/Tobacco Quit Line
 - 651-227-8014 or 1-800-586-4872
- *Mayo Clinic Nicotine Dependence Center's Residential Treatment Program
 - 1-800-344-5984 or 1-507-266-1930

What Else You Can Do

There are a few other things you can do to help make your heart healthier:

- Do not drink alcohol.
- Keep all of your clinic and lab appointments.
- Call your health care provider if your weight goes up or if you have any new symptoms.

***There may be a cost to you. Check with your insurance provider.**