

What is heart failure?

- Heart failure means the heart does not pump enough blood throughout the body.
- Heart failure is a **serious** medical condition that can range from mild to severe.
- Heart failure is a chronic condition that cannot be cured but medications can make it easier for your heart to work and may help you feel better.

Take your heart failure medications as prescribed

- Medications may prevent your heart failure from getting worse.
- It may take several weeks for your medications to help you feel better.
- Talk to your doctor or nurse practitioner before stopping any of your medications.

Pay attention to your body and how you feel. This is a very important part of managing heart failure:

- Sudden weight gain can be an early sign of fluid build-up.
- Sudden weight loss can be a sign that you are losing too much fluid.
- Call your doctor or nurse practitioner right away if you notice sudden weight change, or any of the signs of worsening heart failure (listed on the back of this page).
- Your doctor or nurse practitioner may need to change your medications.

Limit salt (or sodium) in your diet:

- Salt (or sodium) acts like a sponge and keeps extra fluid in your body.
- Extra fluid may cause swelling, fullness in your stomach, or more shortness of breath.

Limit the amount of fluid you drink to 6 to 8 cups in one day unless your doctor or nurse practitioner have told you differently

(examples of fluids include water, soup, coffee, tea, milk, pop, jello, pudding and ice cream):

- Extra fluid may cause swelling, fullness in your stomach or more shortness of breath.

Exercise as instructed by your doctor or nurse practitioner:

- Staying active makes you feel less tired and less short of breath.
- Walking is one of the best exercises you can do.
- Rest when you feel more short of breath, have chest pain or feel unwell.

Talk to your doctor or nurse practitioner if you need help limiting alcohol use or help to quit smoking:

- Alcohol can make your heart failure worse.
- Smoking is one of the worst things you can do for your heart.

Need more information?

Talk to your doctor, nurse practitioner or other members of your health care team.

Internet Resources – see the back of this page

Reminders for patients with heart failure

How to care for yourself with Heart Failure	Symptoms your heart failure may be getting worse	Call your doctor or nurse practitioner right away
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weigh yourself daily in the morning before breakfast and after using the bathroom. (wear similar clothing for each weigh-in) • Keep a record of your weight • Take your medications as prescribed • Continue your salt restricted diet as instructed • Do not drink more than 6-8 cups of fluid a day (2 litres) • Balance activity with rest periods • For more information visit the following recommended Internet resources: <p>Heart and Stroke:</p> <p>www.heartandstroke.ca/heart/conditions/heart-failure</p> <p>Heart Failure Society of America:</p> <p>www.hfsa.org/patient</p> <p>Heart Failure Matters – available in 10 languages:</p> <p>www.heartfailurematters.org</p>	<p>You are the expert on how you feel. Take time each day to notice whether your heart failure is getting worse. Noticing changes early and reporting them to your doctor or nurse practitioner can prevent urgent health concerns.</p> <p>Keep track of these symptoms every day and call your doctor or nurse practitioner if they get worse:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A weight gain or loss of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 2 pounds or 1 kilogram a day or ▶ 5 pounds or 2 to 3 kilograms a week • More swelling in your feet, legs or stomach • Loss of appetite, bloating or fullness in your stomach, nausea or vomiting or diarrhea • Increased shortness of breath with your usual activities or when lying flat • Feeling more tired or weak • A constant cough or chest congestion • Feeling dizzy, light-headed or sweating • Feeling confused or restless 	<p>Call your doctor or nurse practitioner right away if you have any of these:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased shortness of breath or a new shortness of breath while resting • Trouble sleeping because of difficulty breathing – for example, if it wakes you up at night • Need to sleep sitting up using more pillows than usual • Fast or irregular heartbeats or a “racing heart” that makes you feel dizzy • Feeling like you may faint <div data-bbox="1417 917 2026 1015" style="background-color: black; color: white; text-align: center; padding: 5px;">Call 911</div> <p>Call 911 or your local emergency number right away if you have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Severe shortness of breath that will not go away • Fainted • Chest discomfort or pain that lasts more than 15 minutes and is not relieved by rest or nitroglycerin (if prescribed for you) • Coughing up pink or frothy sputum