



WATCH and Control Your Heart Failure



UnityPoint Health



W

Weigh yourself every morning after you go to the bathroom. Wear the same amount of clothes.



A

Keep as active as possible. Consider cardiac rehabilitation.



T

Take your medications as prescribed.



C

Call your health care team if you gain 3 pounds in a day, 5 pounds in a week or have shortness of breath or other worsening symptoms.



H

Heart healthy diet. Follow your sodium (salt) restriction.

Weigh Yourself on a Quality Scale

Keep track of your weight each day to help you feel better. It is important to write the number down on your weight journal or calendar. Knowing how much you weigh each day helps your health care team know if your body has extra fluid. Take your weight journal or calendar with you when you go to see the health care team.

When should I weigh myself?

Every morning before you eat or drink and after using the bathroom. Wear the same amount of clothes.

Do I have a digital scale at home?

If you do not have a digital scale at home, make plans to buy one. Talk with your nurse if you will not be able to buy a scale.

What should I look for when buying a scale?

A scale that provides a correct weight is important for your health.

Look for these features:

- Will weigh up to 440 pounds
- Large LED display
- Light stays on after stepping off the scale
- Low to the ground
- Large space for your feet
- Weighs the same when you test it a few times



Activity Guidelines for Heart Failure

Activity and exercise are good for you. **Activity** is moving your body such as putting on clothes and doing housework. **Exercise** is planned activity to keep you fit and healthy. Both of these will help:

- Make your heart stronger and may improve your heart's function
- Lower your risk for health problems like high blood pressure, diabetes, being overweight, and additional heart problems
- Lessen shortness of breath
- Lessen feelings of being tired, tense or depressed

The more active you are, the sooner you will be able to start an exercise program.

Ask your health care team about a referral to Cardiac Rehabilitation (Cardiac Rehab). Nurses and specialists from Cardiac Rehab can help you learn more about heart failure, manage your symptoms, and serve as a support system. They can help you determine what types of activity are good for you and help create an exercise plan just for you.

How do I get started?

Start by planning some activity each day, and add more as you can. Some ways to start may be to:

- March in place during commercials when watching TV
- Walk slowly around your home for 2 minutes several times a day
- Meet a friend for a walk indoors such as at a mall

How much should I exercise?

Your goal is to work up to **30 minutes at least 5 days a week**. It doesn't have to be all at once.

- Start with 5-20 minutes of comfortable exercise (walking or biking).
- Increase by 5 minutes as tolerated each week.

Exercise Tips

- **Choose activities that use the large muscles of the arms and legs.** Walking, bicycling and water exercises are good options.
- **Make exercise a part of your daily schedule.** Plan the exercise at a time in the day when you have the most energy.
- **Slow down or rest** if you are too short of breath or find it hard to talk when you are exercising.
- **Breathe normally** when you exercise. Do not hold your breath.
- **Keep an exercise record**, so you can see how you improve.

Take Your Medications

There is no cure for Heart Failure. Taking medication can help you:

- Live significantly longer ➤ Feel better ➤ Stay out of the hospital

Heart failure is a lifelong disease. You may need medications even without symptoms. It's common for medication dosage to be changed. Your medications may require labs regularly.

Common Medications (You will take all or some of these medications)

☐ **ARNI / ACE Inhibitor / ARB**

- Helps your blood vessels relax and helps your heart pump better
- Possible side effects:
 - Feeling dizzy
 - Dry cough
 - High potassium
 - Swelling of your tongue or throat
- Examples: Entresto (sacubitril/valsartan), Lisinopril, Losartan

☐ **Beta-Blocker**

- Lowers blood pressure, slows your heart rate, and may make your heart stronger (improve ejection fraction)
- Possible side effects:
 - Feeling tired or dizzy
 - Slow heart rate
- Examples: Metoprolol Succinate, Carvedilol, Bisoprolol

☐ **MRA**

- Blocks the effects of aldosterone, a hormone that can aggravate heart failure
- Possible side effects:
 - High potassium
 - Increased urine output
 - Larger or tender breasts in men and women
- Examples: Spironolactone, Eplerenone

☐ **SGLT2 Inhibitor**

- Common diabetic medication that is now also used for heart failure. May help get rid of extra fluid and help the heart use energy better.
- Possible side effects:
 - Feeling dizzy
 - Low blood sugar
 - Increased urine output
 - Increased risk of urinary tract infection (burning on urination, urinating more often)
- Examples: Dapagliflozin (Farxiga), Empagliflozin (Jardiance)

☐ **Diuretic or "water pill"**

- Helps your body get rid of extra water in lungs, ankles, legs, and stomach.
- Makes you urinate more often
- Possible side effects:
 - Feeling dizzy
 - Feeling weak
 - Low potassium
 - Leg cramps
- Examples: Furosemide, Torsemide, Bumetanide, hydrochlorothiazide, chlorthalidone and metolazone

Other Possible Medications

☐ **Digoxin**

☐ **Vasodilator**

- Examples: Hydralazine, Isosorbide Dinitrate

☐ **Vericiguat (Verquvo)**

☐ **Ivabradine (Corlanor)**

How to Take Your Medications

» Do:

- Take your medications for heart failure each day
- Take your pills how your health care team tells you
- Get lab work done and attend your doctor visits
- Use a pillbox and/or a medications chart to remind you to take your pills
- Talk with your health care team and pharmacist before taking over-the-counter medications
- Talk with your health care team and pharmacist and know what to do if you miss a dose of your medication
- Tell your health care team you have heart failure

» Avoid:

- Medications or supplements that can make heart failure worse
 - Anti-inflammatory pain relievers such as ibuprofen (Advil or Motrin), naproxen (Aleve), or aspirin (greater than 81 mg daily)
 - Over-the-counter potassium unless prescribed
 - Talk to your health care team if you are taking some prescription calcium channel blockers (diltiazem, verapamil), antiarrhythmics (flecainide, propafenone), or Thiazolidinediones (pioglitazone and rosiglitazone)



Call Your Health Care Team If:

You have new or worsening symptoms, such as:

- You have new or increased shortness of breath or need to sit up to breathe better
 - You have a new cough or wheeze that does not go away
 - You have increased swelling in hands, legs, ankles, feet or stomach
 - Your weight increased by 3 pounds or more since yesterday or 5 pounds or more in the last week
 - You don't want to eat
 - You are not able to think clearly
 - You are dizzy or lightheaded, or you feel like you may faint
 - You are so tired or weak that you can't do your usual activities
 - You are not sleeping well. Shortness of breath wakes you up at night. You need extra pillows
-

Call 911 If:

You have worsening symptoms of sudden heart failure, such as:

- Severe trouble breathing
- Coughing up pink, foamy mucus
- A new irregular or fast heartbeat
- You feel distressed
- Chest discomfort not relieved by nitroglycerin



Heart Healthy Diet

A heart healthy diet includes many foods that are lower in sodium and is important because salt (sodium) in your food can make you hold on to extra fluid. Fluid buildup can result in fluid in your lungs which can cause trouble breathing, swelling and weight gain. This extra fluid results in your heart having to work harder.

Eating plenty of nutrients is important for your overall health and to avoid disease-related complications. A diet with a variety of different colored fruits and veggies helps get many of these needed nutrients. An overall healthy dietary pattern also includes whole grains, low-fat dairy products, fish, poultry, unsalted nuts and legumes (beans, peas and lentils). A registered dietitian can help support you in making changes to your diet.

- Fresh, whole foods are almost always better for your health, although if you read food labels, there are some great low sodium canned, frozen, or packaged food options available.
- The Heart Failure Society of America recommends that you eat between 2,000 – 3,000 milligrams (mg) of sodium each day (which includes hidden salt in your foods). Your care team may prescribe a different sodium level to eat each day.
- Read Nutrition Facts labels on your food for the sodium it contains.
- Boost the flavor of foods by using herbs and spices.
- Use seasonings that do not have the word “salt” in them.
- Most sea salts, kosher salt, and Himalayan salt contain about the same amount of sodium as table salt. These are not low sodium alternatives.
- Avoid salt substitutes containing potassium if you have certain medical conditions that require you to limit your potassium intake.

Heart Healthy Label Reading

Nutrition Facts	
8 servings per container	
Serving size	2/3 cup (55g)
Amount per serving	
Calories	230
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 8g	10%
Saturated Fat 1g	5%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 160mg	7%
Total Carbohydrate 37g	13%
Dietary Fiber 4g	14%
Total Sugars 12g	
Includes 10g Added Sugars	20%
Protein 3g	
Vitamin D 2mcg	10%
Calcium 260mg	20%
Iron 8mg	45%
Potassium 235mg	6%
* The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.	

START HERE: Pay attention to the serving size and the number of servings in the package. The numbers on the label are based on one serving; if you eat more than one serving, you will need to multiply the number by the number of servings that were eaten.

CHECK THE SATURATED FAT: Aim for 12-16 grams or less of total saturated fat per day, ideally choosing food items with less than 3 grams saturated fat per serving.

CHECK THE SODIUM: Your total sodium intake for a day should be between 2,000 - 3,000 mg, so be aware of how much is in each serving you eat.

Copyright © Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. This handout maybe duplicated for client education

Coping and Support

Heart failure brings big changes to your life. Dealing with your emotions and seeking help when you need it can help you live better with this disease.

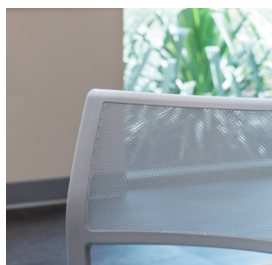
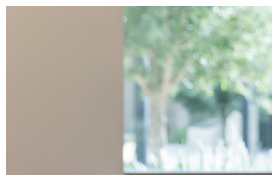
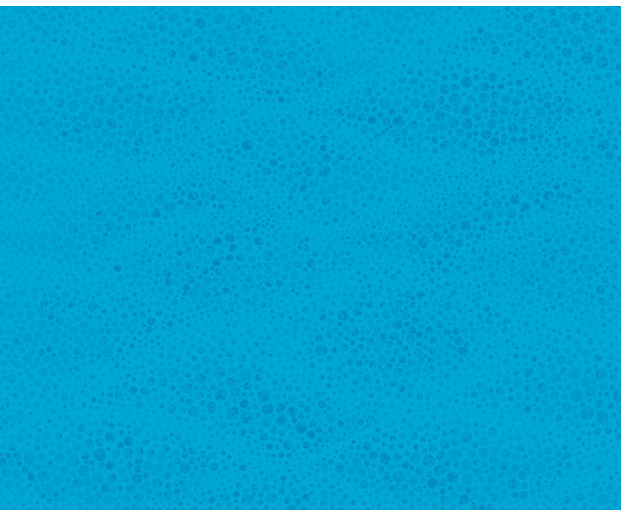
Cope with your feelings

Heart failure can be hard on your emotions. You may feel sad that you can't do things you used to do. You may worry about your future. And symptoms, such as shortness of breath, can make this anxiety worse.

Talk to your doctor if you have signs of depression, like feeling sad and hopeless much of the time, or if you're worried a lot. Depression and anxiety can be treated.

Find support

Emotional support from friends and family can help you cope with heart failure. You might want to think about joining a heart failure support group. Or you can look for an online support group. Meeting other people with the same problems can help you know you're not alone.



Joan's Story

Joan figured she'd need months to recover physically from the heart attack that led to her heart failure. She didn't know she would need just as much time to recover emotionally.

Having heart failure changed how Joan saw herself. "I went from being an active person to barely being able to walk," she says.

Joan worried that any activity would harm her heart. "I could feel my heart pounding when I walked up the stairs, even if I went slowly. I was afraid I would drop dead."

Joan also felt down about all the medicines she needed to take.

"I went into a terrible depression," she says. "I would sit at home in this cloud of dread. I felt like I would never be me again. I knew I needed some help."

Her doctor recommended a counselor.

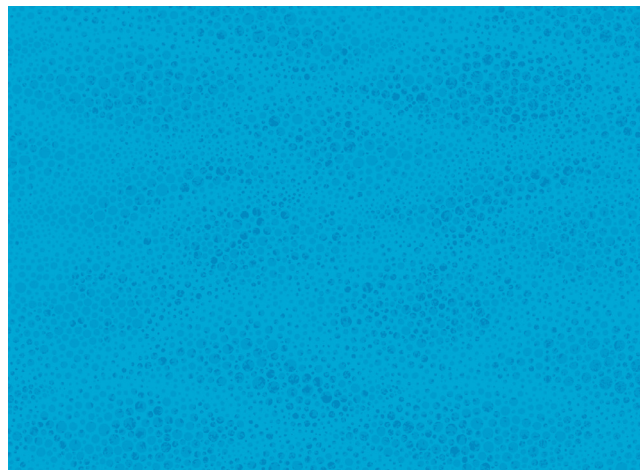
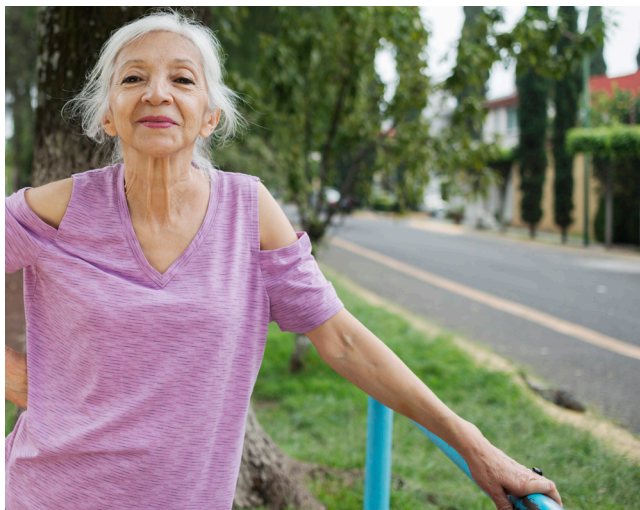
The counselor "helped me see that I was focusing on all the things I couldn't do anymore, instead of the things I could do. Maybe I can't exercise as hard as I did before, but I can be active. I may have to take breaks, but I can still walk and swim."

One of the ways the counselor helped was by showing Joan how to stop negative thoughts before they overwhelmed her.

Her doctor also prescribed an antidepressant, which Joan plans to take until she and her doctor feel she is ready to stop.

Joan knows that she will have good days when she has a lot of energy and other days when she feels tired. "But I'm doing much better. I enjoy my life again."

This story is based on information gathered from many people facing this health issue. Copyrighted material adapted with permission from Healthwise, Incorporated.



unitypoint.org

Copyright © 2024 UnityPoint Health. All Rights Reserved. ® SM trademarks of UnityPoint Health.
000236b-7 08/25 CS



UnityPoint Health