

Heart Failure

Take Control,
Live Better





Heart Failure

Heart failure means that your heart muscle does not pump as much blood as your body needs. Failure does not mean that your heart has stopped. It means that your heart is not pumping as well as it should.

Because your heart cannot pump well, your body tries to make up for it. To do this:

- ▶ Your body holds on to salt and water. This increases the amount of blood in your bloodstream.
- ▶ Your heart beats faster.
- ▶ Your heart gets bigger.

Your body has an amazing ability to make up for heart failure. It may do such a good job that you don't know you have a disease. But at some point, your heart and body will no longer be able to keep up. Then fluid starts to build up in your body, and you have symptoms like feeling weak and out of breath.

This buildup of fluid is called congestion. It's why some doctors call the disease **congestive heart failure**.

Heart failure usually gets worse over time. But treatment can slow the disease and help you feel better and live longer.

What can you expect?

At first you may not have any symptoms from heart failure. But as your heart has more trouble pumping enough blood to your body, you may get short of breath when you walk or do other activities. You also may feel very tired.

Your heart will try to make up for heart failure by pumping faster and by pumping more blood with each beat. But over time, these efforts can make your heart weaker and can make symptoms worse.

What is sudden heart failure?

Sometimes your symptoms may get worse very quickly. This is called sudden heart failure. It causes fluid to build up in your lungs. Symptoms may include:

- ▶ Severe shortness of breath.
- ▶ A new irregular or fast heartbeat.
- ▶ Coughing up foamy, pink mucus.

Sudden heart failure is an emergency. You need care right away.

Main Symptoms of Heart Failure

Symptom	What happens?
Shortness of breath	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• You can't catch your breath.• You feel tightness in your chest.• You feel tired when you walk.• You need to stop a lot when you walk.• It may get worse when you lie flat, and it may wake you up at night.
Swelling in the feet and ankles	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• It gets worse at the end of the day or after you stand for long periods.• It may hurt.• Pressure can leave impressions in your skin.• Shoes may no longer fit.
Being very tired (fatigue)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• You have less energy and feel more tired than usual.• You can't exert yourself like you could before.
Abnormal heartbeat	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Your heart races or pounds.• Your heart skips beats (palpitations).
Change in urination	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• You urinate more at night.
Weight gain	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fluid builds up, and weight goes up quickly.



Treatment

Treatment for heart failure can slow the disease and help you feel better and live longer.

Medicines

You probably will need to take several medicines to treat heart failure, even if you don't have symptoms yet. Medicines don't cure heart failure. But they can help your heart work better and improve any symptoms that you do have.

Medicines can:

- ▶ Relieve or control symptoms.
- ▶ Treat other health problems you have, such as coronary artery disease.

- ▶ Improve your daily quality of life.
- ▶ Slow the rate at which your heart failure gets worse.
- ▶ Reduce the chance of other problems from heart failure, such as stroke.
- ▶ Reduce hospital stays.
- ▶ Help you live as long as possible.

It's very important to take your medicines exactly as your doctor says. If you don't, your heart failure may get worse or you may get sudden heart failure.

You will probably take several medicines for heart failure. To get the best results from your medicines, you need to take them properly. This can be tricky when you have to take more than one. For tips that can help, go to www.healthwise.net/patiented and enter **A465** into the search box.



Devices that can help

If you have a problem with your heart rhythm, you might need a device that helps your heart keep a steady rhythm.

Cardiac resynchronization therapy uses a **biventricular pacemaker** placed in your chest to make the heart's lower chambers (ventricles) pump in the right order. This type of pacemaker can help you feel better so you can be more active. It also can slow down how fast your heart failure gets worse, help keep you out of the hospital, and help you live longer.

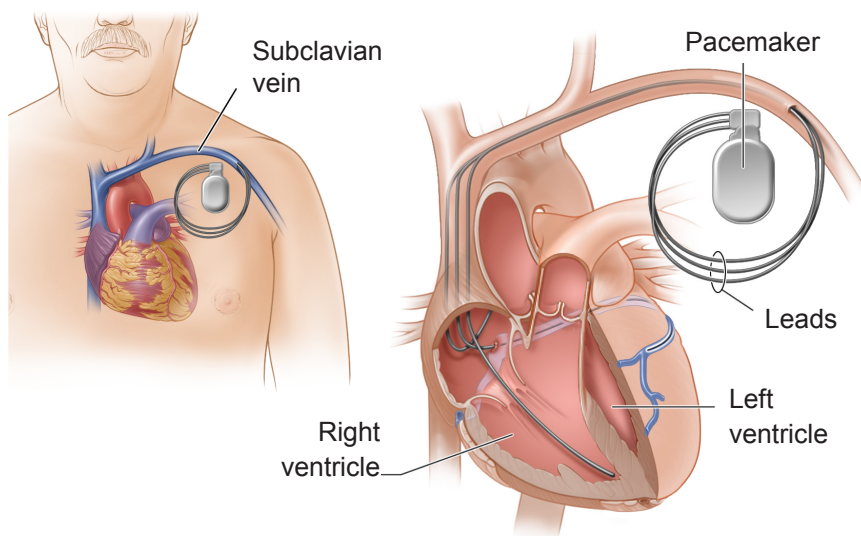
An **implantable cardioverter-defibrillator (ICD)** can prevent sudden death from an abnormal heart rhythm and may help you live longer. An ICD checks the heart for very fast and deadly heart rhythms. If the heart goes into one of these rhythms, the ICD shocks it to stop

the deadly rhythm and returns the heart to a normal rhythm.

If you get a pacemaker or an ICD, you have to be careful not to get too close to some devices with strong magnetic or electrical fields. Check with your doctor about what you need to stay away from, what you need to use with care, and what is okay to use.

Other treatments

In some cases, you may have other treatments. For example, your doctor may recommend **oxygen therapy** to reduce your shortness of breath and increase your ability to exercise. Or you may have **cardiac rehabilitation**. This is often recommended before or after you get a pacemaker or have other heart procedures. Your treatment will depend on what you need. Everyone is different.



A biventricular pacemaker sends electrical pulses to the heart to keep the lower chambers (ventricles) pumping together. It can help reduce the symptoms of heart failure.

If you have a heart rhythm problem, you may be thinking about getting a pacemaker or an ICD.



- For help deciding about a **pacemaker**, go to www.healthwise.net/patiented and enter **G812** into the search box.
- For help deciding about an **ICD**, go to www.healthwise.net/patiented and enter **N692** into the search box.

Did You Know?

Your doctor may want you to get **vaccines against pneumonia and the flu**. These vaccines can keep you from getting infections that could put you in the hospital.



Self-Care

Heart failure usually gets worse over time. But there are many steps you can take to feel better and stay healthy longer. These are the most important:

- ▶ **Take your medicines** as prescribed. This gives them the best chance of helping you.
- ▶ **Watch for signs that you're getting worse** so that your doctor can help you. Weighing yourself every day is one of the best ways to do this. Weight gain may be a sign that your body is holding on to too much fluid.
- ▶ **Find out what your triggers are**, and learn to avoid them. Triggers are things that make your heart failure worse, often suddenly. A trigger may be

eating too much salt, missing a dose of your medicine, or exercising too hard.

- ▶ **Limit salt** (sodium) to help keep fluid from building up and make it easier for your heart to pump.
- ▶ **Try to exercise** throughout the week. Exercise makes your heart stronger and can help you avoid symptoms.

There are other things you can do to help too, like eating right, not smoking, not drinking too much alcohol, controlling your blood pressure, and staying at a healthy weight. These things make it easier for your heart to keep pumping. They will also reduce your risk of heart attack and stroke.

Did You Know?

Most people with heart failure can still have an active sex life. But sexual problems are common. Talk to your doctor about any problems you may be having. He or she can help.



Watch Your Symptoms

Prevent sudden heart failure

Sometimes your symptoms may get worse very quickly. This is called sudden heart failure. It causes fluid to build up in your lungs.

Sudden heart failure is an emergency. But there are ways to reduce the chance of sudden heart failure. And you also can learn how to tell when your heart failure is getting worse.

- ▶ Pay attention to your symptoms. Changes in your weight, difficulty breathing, decreased appetite, and swelling (usually first noticed in the feet and legs) may be signs that your heart failure is getting worse.
- ▶ Keep your diet, exercise, and medicine routine as close to the same schedule as possible.

- ▶ Avoid things that you know can trigger heart failure, such as eating too much salt.

Check your weight every day

Get in the habit of weighing yourself every day and writing down your weight. Sudden weight gain may mean that fluid is building up in your body and your heart failure is getting worse.

- ▶ Weigh yourself at the same time each day, using the same scale on a hard, flat surface. The best time is in the morning after you go to the bathroom and before you eat or drink anything.
- ▶ Wear the same thing each time you weigh yourself, or always wear nothing. Do not wear shoes.

Did You Know?

In general, it's a good idea to call your doctor **anytime** you have a sudden change in symptoms.

- ▶ Keep a calendar by the scale. Write your weight on it each day, and take it with you when you see your doctor.
- ▶ Keep notes on how you feel each day. Is your shortness of breath worse? Are your feet and ankles swollen? Do your legs seem puffy? Do you have to prop yourself up more at night to breathe, or do you wake up suddenly in the middle of the night feeling out of breath?

Avoid triggers

Sudden heart failure can be prevented by avoiding the triggers that cause it.

Some common triggers are:

- ▶ Eating too much salt.
- ▶ Exercising too hard.
- ▶ Not taking your medicines the right way.
- ▶ Taking medicines that make heart failure worse.

Not all people are sensitive to or react to the same triggers. What may cause sudden heart failure in one person may not cause another person any trouble.

Talk with your doctor about your possible triggers.

Symptom Record

Use this form to describe how severe your heart failure symptoms are and whether they get worse. Also, write down any new symptoms that you have. Take this form with you when you visit your doctor.

Symptoms	Describe severity of symptoms, when they started, and whether they got worse
Shortness of breath	
Swelling in your legs or ankles	
Cough	
Energy level	
Weight changes	
Urination at night	
Stomach trouble, bloating, poor appetite	

When to call a doctor

Call 911 if:

- ▶ You have chest pain or pressure or a strange feeling in your chest or other parts of your upper body that has not gone away with rest or within 5 minutes after you take nitroglycerin, especially if the feelings occur with shortness of breath, sweating, and nausea.
- ▶ You have symptoms of a stroke. These may include:
 - o Sudden weakness, numbness, tingling, or loss of movement in your face, arm, or leg, especially on only one side of your body.
 - o Sudden change in vision.
 - o Sudden trouble speaking.
 - o Sudden confusion or trouble understanding simple statements.
 - o A sudden, severe headache that is different from past headaches.
 - o Sudden problems with walking or balance.
- ▶ You have severe trouble breathing.

- ▶ You cough up foamy, pink mucus.
- ▶ You fainted.
- ▶ Your heart suddenly starts to beat very fast or unevenly, and you feel dizzy, nauseated, or like you are going to faint.

Call your doctor if you have signs that your heart failure is getting worse. For example:

- ▶ You gain 3 pounds or more over 2 to 3 days. (Or your doctor may tell you how much weight gain to watch for.)
- ▶ You have new or worse swelling in your feet, ankles, or legs.
- ▶ Your breathing gets worse. Activities that did not make you short of breath before are hard for you now.
- ▶ Your breathing when you lie down is worse than usual, or you wake up at night needing to catch your breath.

Did You Know?

Always ask your doctor before you take any new medicines, including those you can buy without a prescription. Some medicines can make heart failure worse.



Healthy Eating

Cut the salt

Eating less salt (sodium) can help you feel better and stay out of the hospital. Salt makes your body retain water, makes your legs swell, and makes it harder for your heart to pump.

Your doctor may want you to eat less than 2,000 mg of salt each day. That's less than 1 teaspoon. You can stay under this number by limiting the salt you eat at home and by watching for "hidden" sodium when you eat out or shop for food.

Write down what you eat and how much salt it has. That way, you will know when you are close to (or over) your limit.

Eating less salt can be hard, but it has a big reward: feeling better and staying out of the hospital. Here are five tips that can help you get started.

- 1. Read food labels.** Salt may be "hidden" in foods under many different names, such as sodium bicarbonate, disodium phosphate, and monosodium glutamate (MSG). Buy foods labeled "no salt added," "sodium-free" (less than 5 mg per serving), or "low sodium" (less than 140 mg per serving).
- 2. Eat lots of fresh or frozen fruits and vegetables.** They have very little salt, and they're good for you.
- 3. Rinse canned vegetables or beans** before you use them. They are very high in salt unless you buy low-sodium or sodium-free kinds.
- 4. Flavor your food** with garlic, lemon juice, onion, vinegar, healthy oils (olive, walnut), herbs, and spices instead of salt. Do not use soy sauce, steak sauce, onion salt, garlic

If you're ready for more ideas on how to reduce the salt in



your diet—or want an easy way to keep track of what you eat—go to www.healthwise.net/patiented and enter **B256** into the search box. Or if you want to learn how to keep track of your fluid intake, go to www.healthwise.net/patiented and enter **S123** into the search box.

salt, mustard, or ketchup. They all have a lot of salt.

5. Eat fewer processed foods.

These include anything that's not fresh, such as canned foods, packaged lunch meats and hot dogs, bottled sauces, boxed frozen meals, chips, pretzels, and pizza. Eat less often at restaurants, especially fast-food ones.

Eat a heart-healthy diet

In addition to limiting salt, a heart-healthy diet means that you:

- ▶ Eat more fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and other high-fiber foods.
- ▶ Choose foods that are low in saturated and trans fats and cholesterol.
- ▶ Eat more foods that are high in omega-3 fatty acids, such as fish.

If you have to limit fluids

Your doctor may give you “water pills” called diuretics to help get fluid out of your body. For many people, taking this medicine and reducing salt is enough.

If you have advanced heart failure, you may also need to limit how much fluid you drink. This can reduce symptoms and help you stay out of the hospital.

Your doctor will tell you how much fluid you can have each day. Usually, it will range from 4 to 8 cups (32 to 64 fl oz), which is about 1 to 2 liters. You will need to keep track of your fluids so you do not take in more than your body can handle.

High-Salt Foods to Avoid

- ▶ Smoked, cured, salted, and canned meat, fish, and poultry.
- ▶ Ham, bacon, hot dogs, and luncheon meats.
- ▶ Regular hard and processed cheese and regular peanut butter.
- ▶ Crackers with salted tops.
- ▶ Frozen prepared meals.
- ▶ Regular canned and dehydrated soups, broths, and bouillon.
- ▶ Regular canned vegetables.
- ▶ Salted snack foods such as chips.
- ▶ French fries, pizza, tacos, and other fast foods.
- ▶ Pickles, sauerkraut, seasonings high in salt, ketchup, and other condiments, especially soy sauce.

Heart-Healthy Tips for Your Diet

Instead of:	Try this:
Frying your food	Bake, broil, steam, poach, or grill your food.
Eating convenience foods (canned soups, TV dinners, frozen pizza)	Eat fresh fish, skinless chicken, fruits, and vegetables.
Using butter, shortening, or oil high in saturated or trans fats	Use products low in saturated and trans fats, such as olive oil, vegetable oil, canola oil, or chicken broth.
Using salt, soy sauce, or BBQ sauce	Use salt-free spices.
Eating all of the meat product	Trim fat from meat and skin from chicken.
Eating egg yolks	Eat egg whites or egg substitutes.
Eating white bread, pasta, and rice	Eat whole-grain bread, pasta, and rice.



Get Active

If you are not active right now, starting to exercise may seem hard. But it's worth it. Regular exercise:

- ▶ Makes your heart stronger.
- ▶ Makes it easier to breathe.
- ▶ Helps you feel better and have more energy.
- ▶ Helps control your weight and blood pressure.

See your doctor before you start exercising. He or she may want to do a test to see how much activity your heart can handle so you don't push too hard.

Walking is a great way to get exercise. If your doctor says it's safe, start out with some short walks, and then gradually make the walks a little bit longer. Swimming, cycling, or water aerobics might be other good choices. Your doctor can help you make a plan.

Use the form on the next page to record your goals and other details.

Not sure how to get started? Go to



www.healthwise.net/patiented and enter **J903** into the search box for tips on how to be more active when you have heart failure. And talk to your doctor first to be sure exercise is safe for you.

Exercise Planning Form

Special tests I need before I begin an exercise program (if any):

Exercises to help with my chronic health conditions:

Exercises I should not do:

Should I change the time I take my medicines?

Should I take my pulse when I exercise? If so, what range (target heart rate) is best for me?

Warning signs I need to watch for:

Personal supports (like family members or exercise partners) who might help me:

Other questions I have about starting an exercise program:

Physical activities I enjoy or would like to try:

In the beginning, my exercise program will be (what, how often, and how long):

Long-term goals: In the next 6 months I will:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Short-term goals: In the next few weeks I will:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

As you reach your short-term goals, add new ones.



Coping and Support

Heart failure brings big changes to your life. You may struggle with sadness and worry. You may wonder if you'll still be able to enjoy your life. Coping with your feelings and seeking help when you need it can help you live better with heart failure.

Depression and anxiety

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

These feelings are common. Talk to your doctor if you have symptoms of depression, like

feeling sad and hopeless much of the time, or if you are worried a lot. Depression and anxiety can be treated with counseling and medicine.

Get support

Emotional support from friends and family can help you cope with the struggles of heart failure. You might want to think about joining a heart failure support group. Ask your doctor about the types of support that are available where you live, or look for an online support group. Meeting other people with the same problems can help you know you're not alone.

You can help yourself feel better by



changing your “**self-talk.**” Those are the things you tell yourself about how you're coping. Negative thoughts can make you feel bad. To learn how to think in a healthy way, go to www.healthwise.net/patiented and enter **R337** into the search box.

Joan's Story



Joan figured she would need months to recover physically from the heart attack 2 years ago that led to her heart failure. She didn't know she would need just as much time to recover emotionally.

The heart attack and heart failure changed how Joan saw herself. "I went from being this really active person to barely being able to walk at first," she says.

Joan also felt down about being a "heart patient" and all the medicines she needed to take.

"I went into this terrible depression," she says. "I would sit at my kitchen table and feel I was in this cloud of dread. I didn't feel like me. I felt like, 'I'm never going to be me again.'"

She also worried a lot and was anxious that any activity would harm her heart.

"I felt like another heart attack was just waiting to happen," she says. "I could feel my heart pounding when I would walk up some stairs, even if I went slowly. I was convinced that I would drop dead right on the stairs. I knew I had to get some help. I could not keep being sad and afraid all the time."

Joan talked to her husband and some of her close friends about her feelings. They told her that she was the same person they always loved. But Joan felt she needed more 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. I may not be able to exercise as intensely as I did before, but I can be active. I can still take walks and swim. I may have to take more breaks, but I can still do those activities."

One of the ways the counselor helped Joan was by showing her how to stop negative thoughts when 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 has gotten a lot of her strength back. She knows that she will have good days when she has a lot of energy, and she'll have bad 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 living with heart failure.

Action Plan

Work with your doctor to fill out the information below.

Name:	Doctor's Phone Number:
Doctor's Name:	Other Emergency Contact Numbers:
When should I call my doctor?	Next doctor visit date:
Call 911 if:	
List of my medicines:	When to take my medicines:
Does my doctor recommend any changes to my medicines?	
What do I need to check or keep track of? (<i>healthy eating, physical activity, weight</i>)	
Do I need to change my diet or activities?	



When you see this symbol, look for the four-digit code in bold print. Then go to www.healthwise.net/patiented. Type the code into the search box and get helpful, interactive decision-making tools and much more!



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