

## A Patients Guide Living with Heart Failure Information that will help you stay healthy!

While the term “heart failure” may sound life threatening, it does not mean your heart has stopped working. Your heart is still working, but it is not pumping as well as it should. The right amount of blood is not being pumped to the right places in your body. Blood that should be pumped from the heart to the body backs up in the kidneys, lungs and other organs. The backup of blood is what causes your symptoms.

Heart failure won't go away, but it can be managed. Following your treatment guidelines mean the difference between severe symptoms and mild symptoms or no symptoms at all.

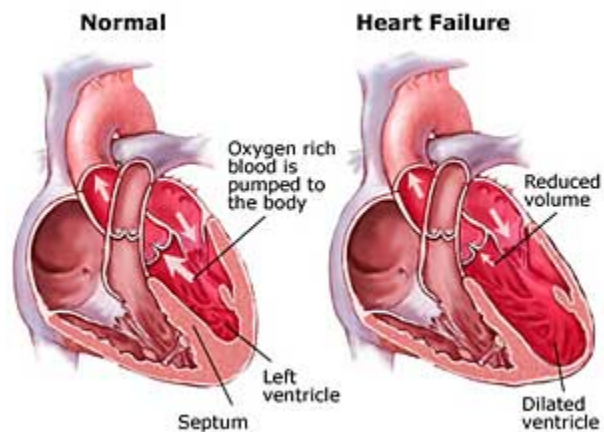
Sometimes flare-ups can occur even when you are following your treatment. If you have any of these common signs of a flare up, call your doctor right away.

### Signs of a Flare Up

- Increased shortness of breath
- Dry, hacking cough or coughing at night
- Swelling in the ankles, feet, legs or abdomen
- Feeling more tired or weak than usual
- Loss of appetite
- Less frequent urination
- Sudden weight gain
- Coughing or shortness of breath that wakes you up or requires you to be propped up on pillows to sleep.

**Sudden weight gain is a sign that your heart is not pumping enough blood** to your tissues and organs. When your kidneys don't get enough blood, they hold salt and water that would normally pass out of the body. Your heart has to work harder to pump this extra fluid. If you gain 2 or more pounds in a 2 to 3 days or normal eating, it's probably due to fluid retention.

Weigh yourself every morning after you urinate and before you eat. Wear the same amount of clothing each time. Record your weight on a chart. Bring the chart along when you see your doctor. Call your doctor if you gain 2 or more pounds for 2 to 3 days in a row or if your clothes or shoes become tight. **Calling your doctor as soon as you notice a sudden weight gain** is one of the most important things you can do to prevent more serious problems from developing.



### What can you do about heart failure?

#### Get More Rest

Take rest breaks during the day. Keep your feet propped up while you rest to improve blood flow. Allow time between activities. If you get tired, stop what you are doing and rest. Get plenty of sleep each night.

#### Eat Less Sodium

Eating too much sodium causes your body to hold fluid and makes your heart work harder. Have no more than 2,000 - 2,400 mgs of sodium a day (1 tsp. of salt is equal to 2,000 mg of sodium).

### Avoid these high-sodium foods:

Packaged bread, pancake & waffle mixes. Canned vegetables & vegetable juices, vegetables in brine (like pickles & sauerkraut)

Canned fish & canned or smoked meats: Bacon, ham, hotdogs, salt pork, sausage (beef, pork, chicken, turkey, or polish). Sandwich meats (like bologna or salami).

Boxed & frozen convenience foods & meals. Snack chips, crackers, pretzels, salted nuts, canned broths & soups; canned tomato sauce.

Garlic, onion & celery salt, seasoning salt, Monosodium glutamate (MSG), Seasoned mixes for chili, tacos, rice, spaghetti. Most bottled sauces & seasonings (like barbeque sauce, catsup, steak sauce, mustard, and soy sauce)

Read the label to see if the food is a good choice. Lower-sodium foods are available, but they may still be high in sodium. Don't salt the foods you cook. Season with dried herbs, garlic or onion, lemon juice or flavored vinegar. Snack on low-salt foods, like air-popped popcorn. Buy fresh meats and vegetables instead of canned or frozen packaged dishes.

### Limit or Avoid Alcohol

Alcohol can depress heart function. It is not usually recommended for people with heart failure. If your doctor says you can have alcohol, have no more than 1 or 2 servings a week (1 serving = 1 oz. of liquor or 5 oz. of wine or 12 oz. of beer).

### Limit Liquids

Ask your doctor how much liquid you should have each day. A common recommendation is no more than 8 cups of liquid a day. You can count these foods as part of your liquid intake:

- Water, juice, milk or soup
- Jello or pudding
- Ice cream or yogurt
- Coffee, tea or soda

Limit drinks that contain caffeine to 2 to 3 cups a day or the amount your doctor suggests.

### **Lose Weight**

Being overweight puts strain on your heart. Talk to your doctor or dietitian about healthy ways to lose weight.

### **Don't Smoke**

Tobacco narrows your blood vessels and makes it harder to breathe. If you use tobacco in any form, find a way to quit. It's the best thing you can do for your heart. Stay away from people who are smoking.

### **Exercise (if your doctor recommends it)**

Exercise won't make heart failure go away, but it can strengthen your muscles, improve your flexibility and help make daily tasks easier. Check with your doctor before you do any type of exercise. If your doctor says it's okay for you to exercise, go slowly. Avoid intense activities.

### **Take Your Medication**

Your doctor may prescribe medication to help your heart work better. Know the name of your medication and when to take it. Find out what to do if you miss a dose. Don't stop taking your medication or change the amount you take without your doctor's permission.

### **Keep Appointments with your Doctor**

Keep all regular appointments with your doctor so your heart can be checked and your medication can be adjusted if needed. Report signs of a flare up to your doctor right away. Early treatment is very important.