



Heart Failure Clinic





You have been told you have heart failure.  
You probably have a lot of questions.

This booklet can help answer some of the questions for you.

Many people are confused about what heart failure means. Heart failure does NOT mean that your heart has stopped or is about to stop. Having heart failure simply means that your heart is not able to pump blood as well as it should. Heart failure is serious, but you are not alone - five million Americans have heart failure.

The heart pumps blood through the body. It brings oxygen, fluid and nutrients to the body's other organs, like the lungs and kidneys. Good blood flow helps the body's organs do their jobs. But, when you have heart failure, your heart cannot pump blood through your body as well as it should. So, you can feel tired, weak and become short of breath easily. You can also have swelling or fluid build-up in your legs, feet, abdomen (stomach), and lungs.

There are several things that you can do to help your heart, manage symptoms, stay active and out of the hospital. The four key ways to help are diet, exercise, lifestyle changes, and medication.

## Causes of Heart Failure

Certain illnesses or conditions can weaken the heart so it cannot pump blood as well as it should. This can lead to heart failure. Common causes include:

- Coronary artery disease or clogged arteries (*the most common cause of heart failure*)
- A previous heart attack (*possibly the "silent" type, meaning you may not have been aware of it*)
- High blood pressure, or hypertension
- Heart valve disease or heart valve damage
- Infection of the heart muscle
- Alcohol or drug abuse

## Symptoms of Heart Failure

**Shortness of breath** You may feel like you do not get enough air when you breathe. You may huff and puff even when you are not doing anything tiring. If fluid has built up in your lungs, it makes it harder to breathe. This can get worse at night.

**Frequent coughing** You may have a nagging cough. The cough can get worse at night.

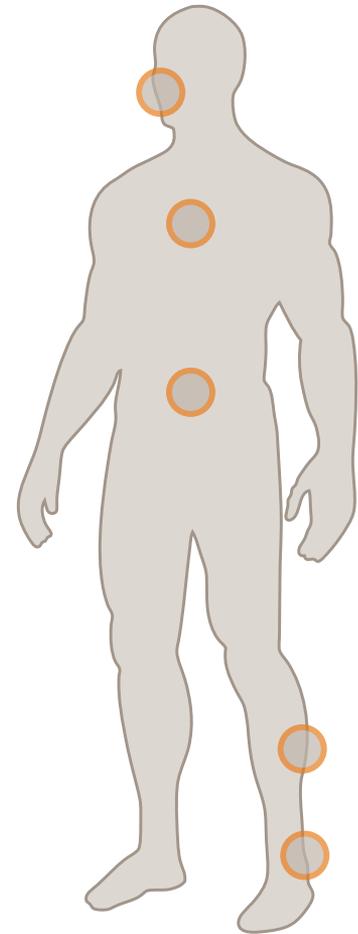
**Fast heart rate or heavy heart beat** Your heart may feel like it is racing or pounding.

**Tired and weak** If you feel tired and weak, you cannot work and do the normal things you do every day. Even walking up stairs or carrying shopping bags is hard.

**Swollen ankles, legs, and/or belly** These are all places where fluid may build up. This can lead to swelling, making them seem puffy and larger than normal. Your shoes and/or rings may feel tight. Your clothes may also feel tight around your waist. This swelling is often worse at the end of the day.

**Loss of appetite and/or nausea** You may not want to eat even when you should be hungry. You also may feel sick to your stomach.

**Weight gain** When extra fluid builds up, it shows up on the scale as extra weight. So, you need to keep track of your weight each day.



If you ignore your symptoms, your heart has to work harder. This can cause your heart failure to become worse, to the point of having to go to the hospital. That is why it is important to call your health care provider as soon as you notice any of these symptoms.

## Heart Failure Clinic

If you do have to be admitted to the hospital for your condition, you may be asked if you want to participate in an outpatient program at our Heart Failure Clinic after discharge.

In the program you will be monitored closely for symptoms as well as learn about diet and exercise. Your medications will be slowly adjusted to the best possible doses for you. You also will learn about these medications and how they are helpful for heart failure patients. You normally start the program two to three days after discharge and then attend weekly for four or more weeks.



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## Things you can do

### *Be an active part of your health care team.*

Your doctors, nurses, dietitians, social workers and pharmacists will work together with you as a team to provide you with the knowledge and tools you need for successful management of your heart failure. It is important to keep your appointments even if you are feeling well.

### *Daily Weighing*

Weight gain can be a sign that your body is holding onto fluids. This can lead to swelling. It may also be a sign that your heart failure is getting worse. Weigh yourself each day at the same time and write it down. Weigh first thing in the morning, after emptying your bladder, before eating or drinking anything and wearing only your birthday suit is best. If you have gained two to three pounds overnight or three to five pounds in a week call, your health care provider right away, even if you are not having any symptoms.

### *Eating a low-sodium (salt) diet*

Sodium is a mineral that your body needs in small amounts. Too much sodium makes your body retain, or hold on to, water. Your heart then has to work harder to pump blood. This can make your symptoms worse.

*One of the most important parts of living with heart failure is limiting your sodium intake.*



Heart failure patients should consume (eat and drink) no more than 2000 mg of sodium a day. Sodium is in the food you eat and some beverages you drink. Just one teaspoon of salt has 2300 mg of sodium! Yes, this does include sea salt. So, you have to closely watch what you eat and drink at each meal and snack.

## Things you can do at home

### *Tips for Reducing Sodium in Your Diet*

- Get rid of your salt shaker.
- Cook without salt.
- Use herbs, spices and salt-free seasoning blends in cooking and at the table.
- Buy fresh, plain frozen, or canned “with no salt added” vegetables.
- Use fresh poultry, fish, and lean meat, rather than canned or processed types.
- Limit smoked, cured, or processed beef, pork, or poultry, which is high in sodium.
- Cook rice, pasta, and hot cereals without salt.
- Cut back on instant or flavored rice, pasta, and cereal mixes, which usually have high sodium.
- Choose “convenience” foods that are lower in sodium.
- Cut back on frozen dinners, pizza, packaged mixes, canned soups or broths, and salad dressings — these often have a lot of sodium added.
- Rinse canned foods, such as tuna, to remove some sodium.
- When available, buy low- or reduced-sodium, or no-salt-added versions of foods.
- Choose ready-to-eat breakfast cereals that are lower in sodium.
- If you have heartburn or a headache, take medicines that do not have sodium bicarbonate or sodium carbonate in them.
- Learn to read food labels.
- Keep track of how much sodium is in the food you eat.





<b>Frozen Peas</b>	
<b>Serving Size</b> ½ cup	
<b>Servings Per Container</b> about 3	
<b>Amount Per Serving</b>	
<b>Calories</b> 60	Calories from Fat 0
<b>% Daily Value*</b>	
<b>Total Fat</b> 0g	<b>0%</b>
Saturated Fat 0g	<b>0%</b>
<b>Cholesterol</b> 0mg	<b>0%</b>
<b>Sodium</b> 125 mg	<b>5%</b>
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 11g	<b>4%</b>
Dietary Fiber 6g	<b>22%</b>
Sugars 5g	
<b>Protein</b> 5g	
Vitamin A 15% Vitamin C 30%	
Calcium 0%	Iron 6%
* Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000-calorie diet.	

### *Learn to Read food Labels*

Food labels can help you choose foods lower in sodium, as well as calories, saturated fat, total fat, and cholesterol. Salt content in the food will be listed as sodium. The label tells you:

#### Number Of Servings

The serving size is 1/2 cup. The package contains about 3 servings.

#### Amount Per Serving

Nutrient amounts are given for one serving. If you eat more or less than a serving, add or subtract amounts. For example, if you eat 1 cup of peas, you need to double the nutrient amounts on the label.

#### Percent Daily Value

Percent Daily Value helps you compare products and tells you if the food is high or low in sodium. Choose products with the lowest Percent Daily Value for sodium.

#### Nutrients

You'll find the milligrams of sodium in one serving.

### *Limit Sodium Intake at Restaurants*

Here are some tips to help you limit or avoid sodium when you eat at a restaurant:

#### **Do Order**

- Food that is fresh and broiled, baked, or grilled
- Mixed green salads or fruit as side dishes
- Watch the dressing, which can have high sodium

#### **Do not Order**

- Food that is fried, frozen, or pre-made
- French fries, potatoes or pasta salads
- Dips, potato or nacho chips, salsas, pizza or soups
- Dishes made with a lot of sauce

#### **How to Order**

- Ask your server how much sodium and fat are in menu items.
- Choose foods that have the smallest amount of sodium and fat per serving. Some restaurants now have heart healthy items on their menu usually marked by a heart. Ask for dressings and sauces to be put on the side. Then, just use a little on your food or do not use them at all.
- Tell your server that you don't want cheese, MSG, salt, seasonings, or butter added to your food.

#### **Other Ideas**

- Don't eat at fast food restaurants. Food in these places is often pre-made and can have a lot of sodium.
- Don't eat snacks from vending machines.
- Bring your own low-sodium, heart-healthy foods like fresh fruits, vegetables.



## Lifestyle Changes

You can make changes in your daily life that can help you.

### *Get Regular Exercise*

Your heart is a muscle and regular exercise can make it stronger. Regular exercise will help build your strength, making everyday tasks easier to do. To start, walking, swimming or riding a bike are good choices. Always talk to your health care provider about the exercise program that is best for you.

If you become short of breath or become very tired while exercising, you should stop and rest. If you are not able to talk in full sentences while exercising you need to slow down. If you develop chest pain or pressure, dizziness, racing heart or nausea – stop immediately. If symptoms do not resolve in one to two minutes after stopping, call your health care provider or go to the nearest Emergency Room.

### Exercises To Avoid

- Push-ups
- Pull-ups
- Sit-ups
- Weightlifting over 20 pounds

### *Limit or Avoid Alcohol*

Alcohol makes it harder for the heart to work. So, most clinicians tell their heart failure patients not to drink any alcohol.

### *Stop Smoking*

Smoking and tobacco products can make heart failure worse. Smoking hurts the lungs and the heart and is not good for anyone. If you smoke, you should stop now! Ask your health care provider about tools to help you quit.

Also, stay away from places where other people smoke so that you don't breathe in any second-hand smoke. If someone in your household or a guest smokes please ask him or her to step outside while smoking.

### *Stay at a Healthy Weight*

Less body fat and more muscle means less strain on your heart. Cut fats and calories from your diet, and stay active to help keep yourself at a healthy weight.





## Medications

Medications play a key role in treating heart failure. They can also prevent it from getting worse, but medications do not cure heart failure. They can relieve symptoms, improve heart function, slow the progress of the disease and reduce the risk of complications, hospitalization and premature death. You will need to be on medication for the rest of your life, although the medications and dosages may change over time.

Treatments for heart failure differ from one patient to another. Your doctor will prescribe treatments for you based on the cause of your heart failure and how severe it is. But, all heart failure patients will be on the following drugs unless there is some reason they cannot take the drug:

*ACE (angiotensin-converting enzyme) inhibitors* - Helps lower your blood pressure by opening the blood vessels, making it easier for blood to flow through your body.

*Angiotensin II receptor blockers (ARB)* - Helps lower your blood pressure similar to ACE inhibitors. You will take this if you are unable to take an ACE inhibitor.

*Beta-blockers* - Keeps your heart from working too hard. These medications block the body's response to certain stress hormones that damage the heart. Beta-blockers can help your heart pump more efficiently. People with heart failure who take beta-blockers have been shown to live longer and have

fewer hospitalizations than people who do not take beta-blockers.

**CAUTION:** Do not take your beta-blocker at the same time as an ACE inhibitor. It is best to take one to two hours apart. DO NOT stop taking without talking to your Healthcare Provider.

### **Other treatment options your doctor might prescribe**

*Diuretics (or water pills)* - Helps the kidneys get rid of salt and water from the blood. They make you urinate more. This helps to lower high levels of fluid in people with heart failure.

*Potassium* - Helps your heart and muscles to work. Too high or low potassium may cause you to have dangerous heart rhythms. Some water pills cause you to lose potassium so if you are on one of these pills you will be prescribed a potassium supplement.

**CAUTION:** Do not take over-the-counter potassium supplements. Remember if your water pill is changed, your potassium dose may also change, depending on the potassium level in your blood.

*Aldosterone inhibitors* - Helps block aldosterone, a hormone in the body that causes the body to retain, or hold on to, sodium and water.

*Vasoactive agents* - Widens or relaxes the walls of the blood vessels. ACE inhibitors, angiotensin II receptor blockers, nitroglycerin, and calcium channel blockers are all vasoactive drugs. Sometimes you may be on more than one type of vasoactive drug. These drugs can work together in different ways.

*Digoxin* - Makes the heart pump more strongly. It may also help control certain types of irregular heartbeats.

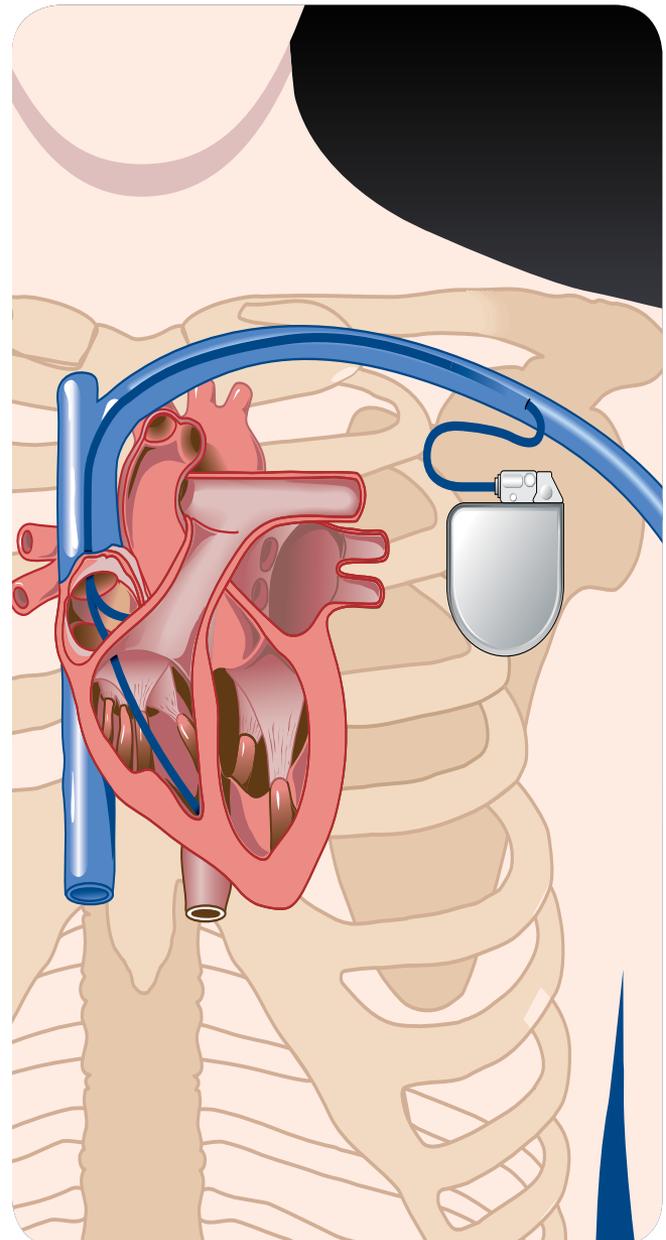
*Cardiac devices set in the body such as special pacemakers and/or defibrillators* - Pacemakers are used to help the heart pump better. Defibrillators are used to correct a dangerous abnormal heart rhythm. If the heart stops, a defibrillator can help jump-start it.

### **Side Effects of Medication**

Some of the side effects of these medications include:

- Dizziness or lightheadedness
- Cough
- Swelling of tongue or face
- Skin rash
- Nausea
- Slow heart rate.

Call your health care provider immediately for these or any other side effects you may have.





### **Ways to help manage your medications**

You will be taking several medications. Keeping track of everything can be daunting, so here are some ways to help you:

- Know the names and doses of your medications and what they are for.
- Write them down on a list.
- Keep a copy in your wallet, glove box of your vehicle and at home.
- Make sure someone other than you knows where the list is.
- Update the list as needed.
- Follow medication instructions.
- Make a medication schedule to plan when you will take your medication. It helps to get in a routine, taking the same medications at the same time each day. You may need to set an alarm to remind yourself. Most cell phones have alarms on them that can be set to go off at the same time each day.
- Use a pillbox to help keep track. It is easy to forget if you have taken a medication or not.
- Do not skip doses. If you miss a dose do not make it up by taking two when the next dose is due. If you are having trouble affording your medication talk to your health care provider for resource options that can help.

**CAUTION:** Do not take any over-the-counter medications or supplements without checking with your health care provider. Many common medications like Aleve,<sup>®</sup> Motrin,<sup>®</sup> Advil,<sup>®</sup> ibuprofen and decongestants should not be taken if you have heart failure. Some herbal and natural medications can also have serious interactions with your medication. Use the same pharmacy for all your prescriptions. This is an important safety net; you will probably have prescriptions from different providers. Your pharmacist can catch any potential problems with drug interactions and check with your health care provider for any changes that may be needed.

### **Other things you can do to help**

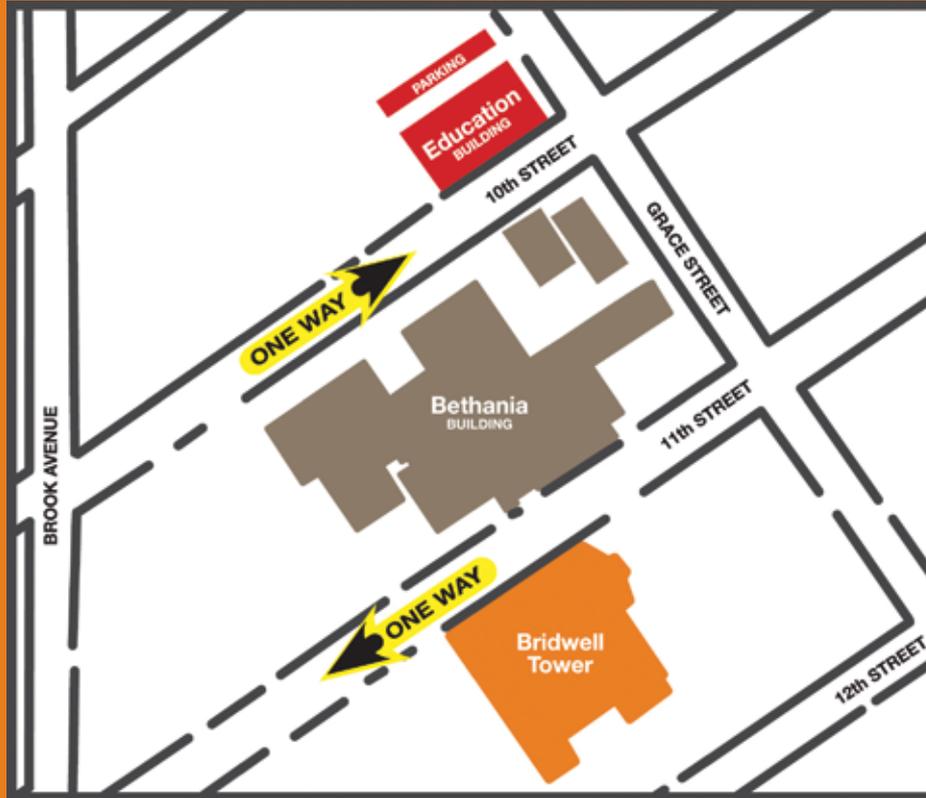
- Notify your health care provider of any new or increased symptoms as soon as you notice them.
- Write down a list of questions before you visit your health care provider. Bring the list with you.
- Write down your weight, blood pressure, symptoms and sodium intake each day. Bring this with you for all appointments.
- Bring all the medications you are taking to your appointments (in their original bottles).
- Write down what your health care provider tells you so that you can remember the details after your visit. Bring someone with you to help you ask questions and take notes.
- Ask any questions you have about heart failure and about your plan to manage heart failure.
- Ask your Healthcare Provider to repeat or explain something if it is not clear to you.
- Do not start or stop any medications or herbal supplements before discussing with your health care provider.



## In Summary

- Eat a low-salt diet.
- Weigh yourself daily.
- Take all of your medications as directed.
- Exercise regularly.
- Call your health care provider if you have any signs of heart failure.
- Keep all of your appointments, even if you are feeling well.
- Bring all of your medications to every appointment.





The Heart Failure Clinic is located in the Education Building at 1600 10th Street (highlighted in red.) Patients may park in back of the building in the reserved spaces. For more information, please contact Corene Crouse at 940-764-5300



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