

# Managing your heart health

A self-care workbook for patients

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Well ahead.<sup>®</sup>



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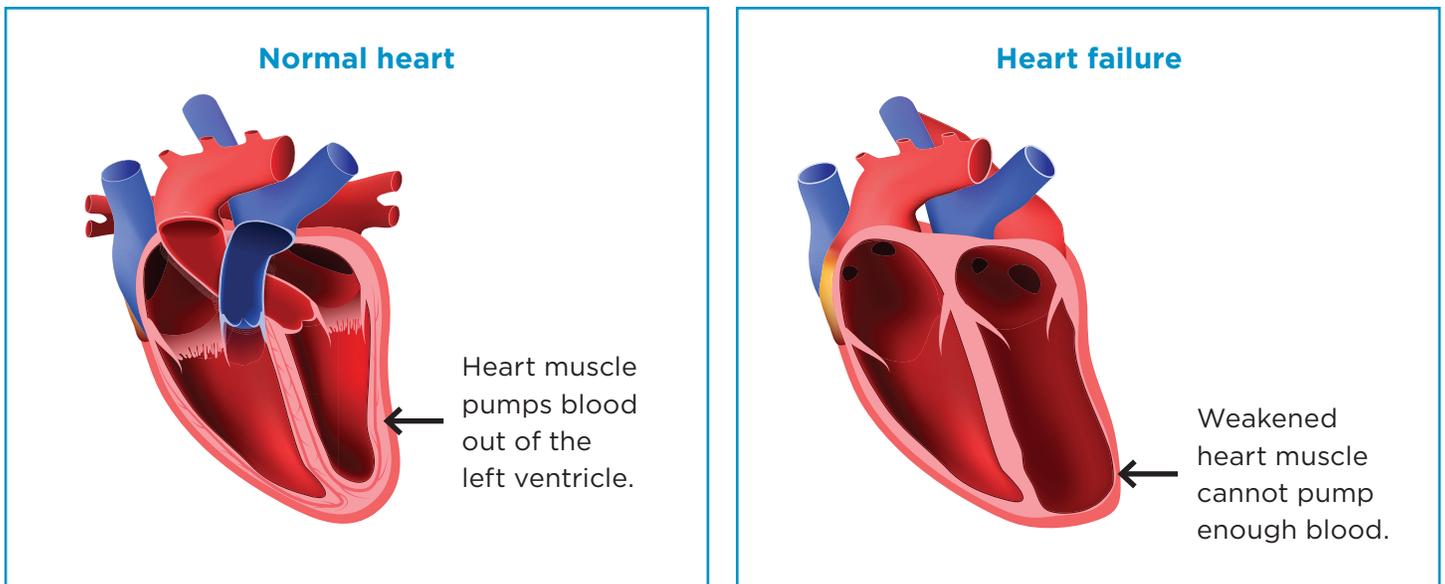
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# Information about your condition

## What is heart failure?

- Your heart does not pump as well as it should.
- Fluid can “back up” into your lungs.
- Fluid can also “back up” into other parts of your body.



## What does heart failure feel like?

- You may cough more or wake up at night short of breath.
- You may be short of breath at any time of the day.
- You may have swelling in your ankles or hands, or in your belly.
- You may feel tired.
- You may not feel like eating.
- You may gain weight, one of the earliest signs of fluid buildup in your body.

# Keeping heart failure under control

Here are some things you can do to help:

1. Take your **MEDICINE** as ordered by your doctor.
2. Stay **ACTIVE** every day.
3. **WEIGH** yourself every day.
4. Follow your **DIET** by eating less salt and reducing your fluid intake.
5. Be aware of **SYMPTOMS**.
6. See your doctor on a regular basis.

# Medicines

Be sure to follow a routine, taking your medicines at scheduled times. It also helps to:

- Use a pill box.
- Refill medicines before you run out.
- Don't skip a dose even if you feel better.
- Know what to do if you forgot to take your medicine.
- Carry a written list at all times of your current medicines, including any allergies.



## Over-the-counter medicines and herbal supplements

**Always check with your doctor before taking over-the-counter medicines or herbal supplements.**

Some of these medicines can be harmful for patients with heart failure. Over-the-counter medications you may need to avoid include:

### **Medicines or herbs with pseudoephedrine**

An example is Sudafed.

### **Medicines or herbs with ephedrine**

Two examples are ma huang and Herbalife.

### **Medicine or herbs with oxymetazoline**

These include nasal sprays. Two examples are Afrin and Dristan Nasal.

### **Certain pain medicines (NSAID)**

These include ibuprofen, such as Advil or Motrin. They also include naproxen, such as Aleve.

### **Aspirin**

If your doctor told you to take a low-dose aspirin every day, it's okay to take it. But more aspirin may make your heart failure worse. Don't use aspirin for pain. It's better to use acetaminophen, such as Tylenol.

## Types of medicines you may be taking

Medication	Purpose	Common side effects
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Diuretic (“water pill”)</b> My medication: _____	Helps you get rid of extra water and sodium (salt) through frequent urination.	Dizziness, weakness, muscle cramps
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>ACE inhibitor or ARB</b> My medication: _____	Widens blood vessels to lower your blood pressure. This helps your heart pump better.	Dry cough, dizziness, headache, fatigue
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Beta-blocker</b> My medication: _____	Lowers your heart rate and blood pressure to help your heart pump better.	Fatigue, cold hands, headache
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Digoxin</b> My medication: _____	Helps your heart beat stronger and at a regular rhythm.	Dizziness, fainting, irregular pulse, upset stomach; fast, pounding, or irregular heartbeat
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Other</b> My medication: _____		
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Other</b> My medication: _____		
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Other</b> My medication: _____		

**DID YOU KNOW?**

Not taking your medicines as instructed is one of the most common reasons people with heart failure are hospitalized.

# Activity

Exercise provides many benefits for you when you have heart failure:

- Improves your muscle tone
- Strengthens your heart
- Lowers your blood pressure
- Increases your energy
- Makes you feel better

Make sure to talk to your doctor before starting any activity or exercise plan. The best exercise plan is one that is tailored to your health habits and interests.



## What about sex?

The physical effort of sexual activity is like walking two flights of stairs at a moderate pace. Most doctors believe you can have sex as soon as you are able, but discuss with your doctor first.

# Weight

Keeping your weight the same is important.

- Your weight will go up if you have too much fluid.
- Too much fluid makes your heart work harder.
- Too much fluid makes your heart failure worse.

Weigh yourself each day:

- First thing in the morning—after you empty your bladder but before you eat or drink
- On the same scale
- Wearing the same type of clothing and footwear each time you weigh yourself

Write your weight on your calendar every day.



## CALL YOUR DOCTOR

**if you gain 3 pounds or more in 1 day  
or 5 pounds or more in 1 week**

## TIP

Weight gain may mean you are retaining fluid, but weight loss may mean that you are dehydrated. Both may mean you need a change in your treatment plan.

# Diet

There are three important adjustments to your diet:

## 1. Salt

Salt/sodium makes your body hold on to fluid. Try to take in less than 2,000 mg of sodium a day. One teaspoon of salt = 2,300 mg of sodium.

### Top sources of sodium:

- Table salt
- Canned soups, stews or sauces
- Frozen dinners or entrees
- Snack foods such as chips, pretzels or popcorn
- Take out and fast food
- Packaged starchy foods such as seasoned rice, noodles, stuffing, macaroni and cheese
- Processed food such as deli meat, cured or smoked meats, canned meats, processed cheese

### Healthy words:

- Steamed
- Sautéed
- Broiled
- Baked
- Seasoned with lemon or fresh herbs

### How can I lower my sodium intake?

- Take the salt shaker off the table.
- Substitute other spices for salt in your cooking.
- Substitute fresh or frozen vegetables for canned food.
- Rinse canned foods for 30 seconds.
- Avoid processed meats such as hot dogs, salami, bacon and other lunch meats.
- Stay away from salty snacks.
- Choose foods labeled "unsalted" or "no salt added" or "low sodium."
- Take time to read and compare food labels.



## 2. Fluids

Drink only eight cups (2 liters) of fluid per day.

When thirsty try:

- Chewing gum
- Sucking on a hard candy
- Rinsing your mouth with water

Watch out for foods that are mostly fluids:

- Soup
- Sherbet and ice cream
- Gelatin
- Watermelon
- Other fruits and vegetables that contain a lot of fluid



## 3. Alcohol

- Cutting back on alcohol reduces strain on your heart.
- If you drink alcohol, limit your intake to one beer, cocktail, or glass of wine each day.
- More than moderate use of alcohol can cause damage to the heart muscle.
- It is best to avoid alcohol altogether.

# Symptoms

Track your weight and symptoms daily

**Use your heart failure calendar to track your weight and symptoms daily.**

A sudden increase in weight means that your body is retaining fluid and it is time to take action. Do not wait for other symptoms to occur. Your doctor may tell you to take an extra water pill for a day or two until your weight comes back down.

January



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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 Weight: _____	2 Weight: _____	3 Weight: _____	4 Weight: _____	5 Weight: _____	6 Weight: _____
7 Weight: _____	8 Weight: _____	9 Weight: _____	10 Weight: _____	11 Weight: _____	12 Weight: _____	13 Weight: _____
14 Weight: _____	15 Weight: _____	16 Weight: _____	17 Weight: _____	18 Weight: _____	19 Weight: _____	20 Weight: _____
21 Weight: _____	22 Weight: _____	23 Weight: _____	24 Weight: _____	25 Weight: _____	26 Weight: _____	27 Weight: _____
28 Weight: _____	29 Weight: _____	30 Weight: _____	31 Weight: _____	Doctor appointments:		



**You are in control if you:**

- Keep your goal weight
- Can breathe easily
- Do not have any swelling in your legs



**Call your doctor if you:**

- Gain 3 pounds or more in 1 day
- Gain 5 pounds or more in 1 week
- Are short of breath
- Notice more swelling in your legs



**Call 911 if you:**

- Have chest pain
- Are unable to breathe

**REPORT**  
**Weight gain of 3 pounds or more in 1 day**  
**or 5 pounds or more in 1 week**

## How to stay out of the hospital

Keep an eye out for these problem areas:

**Avoid running out of medications or not taking them correctly.**

Prevent this by faithfully following your medication plan.

**Avoid taking in too much salt or fluids.**

Prevent this by following your diet daily.

**Avoid using nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAID).**

Such as ibuprofen (e.g. Advil®) and naproxen (e.g. Aleve®). These types of pain relievers can lead to fluid retention. Don't take them without talking to your doctor.

**Manage medical conditions such as infection, high blood pressure, or heart rhythm problems.**

## Keep your appointments with your doctor

**Be sure to follow your treatment plan to keep your heart failure stable.**



How do I feel today?

	 <p><b>Green zone</b></p> <p>You are in control.</p>	 <p><b>Yellow zone</b></p> <p>Take action today. Call: _____</p>	 <p><b>Red zone</b></p> <p>Take action now! Call: _____</p>
<p><b>Is my weight up?</b> My healthy weight:</p> 	<p>No change in my weight.</p>	<p>My weight is up:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 pounds overnight</li> <li>• 5 pounds since last week</li> </ul>	<p>My weight is up:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 pounds overnight</li> </ul>
<p><b>Do I have swelling?</b></p> 	<p>I do not have swelling.</p>	<p>I have swelling in my:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foot, ankle or shin</li> <li>• Knee or thigh</li> </ul>	<p>I have swelling in my:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Belly – feels bloated or pants are tighter</li> <li>• Hands or face</li> </ul>
<p><b>Am I short of breath?</b></p> 	<p>I do not feel short of breath:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Breathing is normal</li> <li>• Sleep is normal</li> </ul>	<p>I feel short of breath or cough while:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Walking or talking</li> <li>• Eating</li> <li>• Bathing or dressing</li> </ul> <p>I need to use more pillows when I sleep.</p>	<p>I feel:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short of breath or wheeze at rest</li> <li>• Less alert</li> </ul> <p>I need to sleep sitting up to breathe.</p>
<p><b>How is my energy level?</b></p> 	<p>My energy level is normal.</p>	<p>I am too tired to do most of my normal activities.</p>	<p>I am so tired that I can hardly do any of my normal activities.</p>
<p><b>My other signs of heart failure:</b></p>			<p>Chest pain or pressure that does not go away.</p>

Daily Check-Up used with permission from the Cecil G. Sheps Center for Health Services Research, Feinberg School of Medicine and the UCSF Center for Vulnerable Populations. Developed by the Sutter Center for Integrated Care, 2013. To request permission please email centerforic@sutterhealth.org.

# My goals and action plan

Taking an active role in your heart failure management is the key to your success. You can take control by following a treatment plan that involves several daily action steps. For example, if you would like to improve your diet or become more active, what additional steps could help you achieve your goal? Participating fully in your self-care plan will help you manage your heart failure and feel your best. Your health care team is here to support you every step of the way!

**I will manage my heart failure by working on 1 or 2 of these goals each week:**

- Take my **MEDICINE** exactly as directed.
- Get regular exercise and stay **ACTIVE**.
- WEIGH** myself daily.
- Follow a low sodium **DIET**.
- Avoid drinking excess fluids.
- Avoid alcohol and quit smoking.
- Monitor my heart failure zone **SYMPTOMS** daily and take action if needed.
- Keep my follow-up doctor's appointments.

**My heart failure management goals:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Things that would help me meet my goal:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Possible problems in meeting my goals:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Action plan checklist

Below are suggestions that can help you along the way. Check and date items as you work toward your goals.

GOAL	ACTION ITEMS	WEEK 1	WEEK 2
<b>MEDICATION</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Take my medication as prescribed. <input type="checkbox"/> Carry an up-to-date list of my medication. <input type="checkbox"/> Use a pillbox to keep me on track. <input type="checkbox"/> Call my doctor to report any medication side effects. <input type="checkbox"/> Call for medication refills before running out. <input type="checkbox"/> Don't skip or double up on my medication. <input type="checkbox"/> Talk first with my doctor/pharmacist before taking over-the-counter medication.	_____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____
<b>ACTIVITY</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Walk ____minutes ____times a day. <input type="checkbox"/> Do light housework. <input type="checkbox"/> Work with my home care physical therapist (if applicable). <input type="checkbox"/> Begin cardiac rehab program. <input type="checkbox"/> Other:_____	_____ _____ _____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____ _____ _____
<b>WEIGHT</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Weigh myself every morning first thing (after urinating). <input type="checkbox"/> Write my weight on my calendar. <input type="checkbox"/> Call my doctor right away for weight gain > 3 lb./1 day or 5 lb./1 week.	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____
<b>DIET</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Take salt shaker off of the table. <input type="checkbox"/> Don't add salt when cooking. <input type="checkbox"/> Keep to <2000 mg salt each day. <input type="checkbox"/> Read food labels for sodium content. <input type="checkbox"/> Avoid packaged, processed, canned and fast foods. <input type="checkbox"/> Choose lean meats, fresh/frozen fruits and vegetables, whole grains and low-fat milk and yogurt. <input type="checkbox"/> Try seasonings and spices such as garlic, herbs, lemon. <input type="checkbox"/> Rinse canned goods before cooking/eating. <input type="checkbox"/> Make special requests and ask for sauces on the side when dining out. <input type="checkbox"/> Follow fluid limit as instructed. <input type="checkbox"/> Keep track of amount of fluid I drink each day. <input type="checkbox"/> Use ice chips, sugarless hard candy, fruit, if thirsty. <input type="checkbox"/> Choose low/no sodium liquids. <input type="checkbox"/> Other:_____	_____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____
<b>SYMPTOMS</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Monitor my daily heart failure zones (refer to page 14). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>GREEN:</b> All clear</li> <li>• <b>YELLOW:</b> Caution, call doctor right away</li> <li>• <b>RED:</b> Get help, call 911</li> </ul>	_____ _____	_____ _____



# Main Line Health resources

Your doctor may recommend other Main Line Health programs to help you manage your heart failure.

## Outpatient cardiac rehabilitation

The outpatient cardiac rehabilitation team:

- Works with your doctor to design an exercise and strength training program for you
- Teaches you about heart-healthy eating habits
- Supports you in managing your stress and making other lifestyle changes

Overseen by doctors, specially trained RNs, and an exercise specialist, the program gives you regular access to coaching and medical staff.

*Requires a doctor referral and is covered by most insurances.*

**Please call cardiac rehab to see if you qualify and to schedule an appointment with one of Main Line Health's outpatient cardiac rehabilitation centers below, call:**

**Lankenau Medical Center**

484.476.8037

**Bryn Mawr Hospital**

484.337.3760

**Paoli Hospital**

484.565.1560

**Riddle Hospital**

484.227.3060

## Cardiac Wellness Center

At the Cardiac Wellness Center we provide a self-pay, affordable cardiac rehab maintenance program open to Main Line Health and non-Main Line Health patients. All activity is supervised by an exercise specialist.

**To learn more about the Cardiac Wellness Center, call:**

**Main Line Health Center in Newtown Square**

484.337.6032

## Nutritional counseling

Registered dietitians provide nutrition assessments and work with your doctor to create nutrition plans based on your health condition and lifestyle. They also provide nutrition education for disease prevention and nutrition counseling for chronic conditions.

**To learn more about nutritional counseling and weight management programs at Main Line Health, call:**

1.866.CALL.MLH

## Additional resources

National programs are also available.

### American Heart Association

1.800.242.8721

[heart.org](http://heart.org)

### Heart Failure Society of America

Download the free patient mobile app to help track and manage your heart failure at:

[hfsa.org/patient/patient-app](http://hfsa.org/patient/patient-app)

301.312.8635

[hfsa.org](http://hfsa.org)



## Home care

- Home care includes a wide range of health care services provided in your home to maintain or restore your health, promote independence, improve quality of life, and avoid unnecessary hospitalization.
- Members of the home health care team work under the direction of your doctor and may include: registered nurses; physical, occupational, or speech therapists; registered dietitians; medical social services; and home health aides.
- Your doctor may order a telemonitoring system to be placed in your home. This monitoring system may include a special scale, blood pressure cuff, or other devices. You will answer questions about how you feel each day on a computer screen. Your care team will teach you how to use the telemonitoring system.

**To learn more about Main Line Health HomeCare & Hospice services, call:**

484.580.1601

## SmokeFREE program

This is a free, state-approved program consisting of six sessions designed to help smokers quit. The program addresses the physical and psychological habit of smoking.

**To register for any SmokeFREE class, call:**

484.227.FREE

**Other resources include:**

1.800.QUIT.NOW



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[mainlinehealth.org](http://mainlinehealth.org) | 1.866.CALL.MLH

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