

Living with Heart Failure

Congestive Heart Failure Clinic



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Your Treatment Plan

Diet:

_____ grams of sodium/per day

_____ cups of fluid per day (_____ oz.)

- Avoid Alcohol
- Weigh yourself each day at the same time on the same scale wearing about the same amount of clothing. If you gain 2-3 pounds in one day or 4-5 pounds in five days, call your doctor.
- Avoid extreme temperatures. Avoid heavy lifting.

Activity: _____

Symptoms:

Call your doctor or nurse if you have new onset or increase in any or the following:

- Chest pain/pressure
- Shortness of breath
- 2-3 pound weight gain in 1 day or 4-5 pounds in 5 days
- Constant cough
- Bleeding or bruising easily
- Swelling of feet and/or hands
- Pain in abdomen or bloating
- Dizziness/fainting

What is Heart Failure?

Heart Failure is a condition in which the heart muscle has become weaker than normal. This usually occurs gradually over a period of time and the heart is unable to pump enough blood and oxygen to meet the body's needs.

When this happens, blood that should be pumped out of the heart backs up in the lungs and other parts of the body. This is why many people with heart failure have shortness of breath or swelling in the extremities. You may also hear heart failure called CHF (Congestive Heart Failure).

As the heart strains to do its work, the heart muscle fibers stretch and the chambers of the heart enlarge. This further weakens the heart's ability to perform.

What are the main causes of Heart failure?

- **The heart doesn't pump as strongly as before.** This can be caused by rheumatic heart disease; a heart attack; an irregular heartbeat; coronary artery disease; HIV; viral cardiomyopathy; diabetes; and drugs such as alcohol, cocaine, and methamphetamine.
- **There is too much work for the heart.** This can be caused by high blood pressure; atherosclerosis (hardening of the arteries); problems with the valves of the heart; or a fast irregular heart rhythm (such as atrial fibrillation). Other causes include congenital heart problems, severe lung disease, and chronic kidney disease.

How Your Heart Works

The heart is divided into four chambers or sections called the right and left atrium and the right and left ventricle. These chambers are separated by valves. Valves allow the blood to move from chamber to chamber without backing up.

The right upper and lower chambers supply blood to the lungs. The left upper and lower chambers supply oxygen-rich blood to the tissues in the body.

With each heartbeat, a normal left ventricle pumps out or "ejects" 55 - 60 percent of the blood it receives. This is known as the "ejection fraction." In heart failure, the heart pumps less blood with each beat, so the "ejection fraction" goes down.

YOUR EJECTION FRACTION _____

Because the tissues are receiving less blood and oxygen, they are unable to perform their functions properly. Activities such as walking, climbing stairs and carrying objects become more difficult. Heart failure, or pumping weakness, can start in the right or left chamber.

Symptoms of Heart Failure

The following symptoms are commonly associated with heart failure:

- Shortness of breath (may be all the time, with exertion, or at night when lying down)
- Difficulty lying flat without extra pillows
 - ◊ When fluid builds up in your lungs, you may find it hard to catch your breath, or experience frequent cough.
- Exercise intolerance
- Increasing fatigue
 - ◊ When your heart is not pumping effectively, the body is not getting enough oxygen rich blood to meet energy demands.
- Swelling in legs
 - ◊ When the body retains fluid, you may notice swelling in feet or ankles.
- Rapid weight gain
 - ◊ Sudden or steady weight gain (for example 2-3 pounds in 1 day, or 4-5 pounds or more in 5 days) shows the body is retaining fluid.
- Abdominal distention and bloating (your clothes may get tighter)
- Decreased appetite
- Changes in the frequency of urination
 - ◊ When the heart is not pumping effectively, the kidneys cannot remove excess fluid from the body. You may notice you are urinating less frequently during the day, or more frequently at night.

Most of these symptoms are caused by excess fluid build-up. In heart failure, the body has difficulty ridding itself of salt and water. The fluid builds up in the tissues of the body in the legs, abdomen and lungs. The heart has to work harder to pump this extra fluid and this causes more fatigue.

It is important to communicate any new or increasing symptoms to your physician. Many times these symptoms can be treated with simple medications and diet adjustments before they are allowed to develop into a more serious situation.

Causes of Heart Failure

Causes of Heart Failure Include:

- Hypertension (high blood pressure)
- Coronary artery disease
- Defective heart valves
- Viral illness
- Illicit drugs, such as cocaine
- Alcohol abuse
- Idiopathic (unknown cause)

Heart failure is generally not curable, but it can be treated and most people will feel better once therapy is started.

Correcting problems such as high blood pressure, blocked arteries, and diseased valves will help. Stopping drugs, alcohol, or cigarettes may help to stop the progression of the disease. Therapy is aimed at helping the heart to work more efficiently and with less effort. A combination of medication, diet, and exercise is an effective course of treatment.

How to Take Care of Yourself: An Overview

In most cases, heart failure is a chronic condition. There is no easy cure. However, there are several ways that you can take an active role in your health.

It is important that you feel comfortable enough with your healthcare team to discuss any questions or concerns that you may have. Never hesitate to notify your healthcare team if you are unclear on some aspect of your healthcare plan or feel that something just isn't quite right with how you feel.

Your healthcare team would always rather hear from you if something were wrong, rather than having you end up in the hospital.

Medicine

Take your medicines exactly as they are ordered. If you are having problems following the medicine schedule, or if you think you are having side effects, be sure to tell your doctor or nurse.

Bring your medicines or a current copy of your medicine list with you to each visit.

Call the doctor's office if you are running low on medicine. Refills can be called in to your pharmacy. If you use mail order, be sure to order early so you do not run out of medicine.

Be sure to tell your doctor or nurse if you are having problems paying for your medicines. They may be able to direct you to places where you can get help.

Weigh Yourself Daily

Any unexplained sudden or steady weight gain (for example greater than 2-3 pounds in one day or 4-5 pounds in five days) may be a warning sign of increased fluid retention. Notify your physician or health professional if you have a weight change or follow your self-care plan for adjusting your daily dose of a diuretic (water pill).

How should I weigh myself?

- Weigh yourself each morning when you get up (after you urinate and before you eat breakfast).
- Weigh yourself in the same type of clothes and using the same scale.
- Put your scale on a hard surface, not carpet.
- Keep a record of your daily weight.
- Know what your weight should be when you are not swollen or retaining water.

YOUR DRY WEIGHT _____

Fluid Restriction

Some patients may have a fluid restriction as ordered by their physician. Moderation of fluid intake prevents excess fluid buildup and extra work.

Discuss limiting fluid with your physician. Remember that liquids include soup, Jell-O, ice cubes, milk, ice tea, etc.

YOUR FLUID RESTRICTION _____

Sodium Restriction

You should restrict your total daily sodium (salt) intake according to your treatment plan. This helps to prevent your body from retaining fluid.

YOUR SODIUM RESTRICTION _____

Exercise

It is important to exercise as prescribed by your physician. Walking and biking are just some examples of exercise that you may perform.

The following pages will give you more detailed information on medications, diet, and exercise. Take charge and learn more about taking care of your health.

Managing Your Medicines

Heart Failure is a serious disease. By being informed about your medicines, you can take an active part in your treatment. The following are helpful hints about your medicines:

- Know the names of your medicines.
- Know how your medications affect your heart. Know the dosage of each medicine and how often you should take it.
- Take your medicine as prescribed by your doctor, even when you are feeling well.
- Never change or stop taking your medicine without talking to your doctor.
- Keep a list of your medicines (prescription and non-prescription), herbs, and vitamins at home and in your wallet.
- Keep a list of medications to which you are intolerant or allergic.
- Take your medicine bottles or a current copy of you medicine list to physician visits.
- Take your medicine with another daily activity you do at the same time of day, such as brushing your teeth.
- If you miss a dose, take it as soon as you remember. If it is within 2 hours of your next dose, skip the dose. Do not double your next dose. If you have any questions contact your heart failure team, pharmacist, or physician.
- A pill organizer is a very helpful way to organize and remember to take medications.
- Never take someone else's medicine.
- Don't take over the counter medicine without checking first with your doctor or nurse.
- Notify your doctor or nurse of any changes that have been made with your medicines.

- Do not let your prescription run out. Obtain your refill when you are down to a two-week supply of medication.
- Many medications can cause dizziness or mild light-headedness when you get out of bed or rise quickly. Get up slowly. Sit on the bed for a minute or two before standing up in the morning or after a nap. Report symptoms of persistent dizziness to your healthcare professional.

Medicines for Heart Failure

There are many medicines used to help treat heart failure. Some drugs can help decrease the progression of heart failure, while other drugs help decrease symptoms.

The different medications can help you feel better. Of course, the more medications you take, the easier it is to make a mistake (such as missing a dose). Forgetting medications is one of the most common reasons people are hospitalized for heart failure.

The best results are seen when patients understand what medicines they are taking and why.

Medication:	Also Called:	They Work By:	Possible Side Effects:
ACE Inhibitors	Benazepril (Lotensin) Captopril (Capoten) Enalapril (Vasotec) Fosinopril (Monopril) Lisinopril (Prinivil/Zestril) Quinapril (Accupril) Ramipril (Altace)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relaxes blood vessels • Makes it easier for the heart to pump • Helps the heart muscle work better • Can lower blood pressure 	Persistent cough, kidney problems, weakness or dizziness, skin rashes, an altered sense of taste, high potassium levels
Beta-Blockers	Atenolol* (Tenormin) Bisoprolol (Zebeta) Carvedilol (Coreg) Metoprolol XL (Toprol XL)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blocks the body's response to certain substances that can damage the heart • Helps the heart muscle to work better and not work as hard • Can lower blood pressure and heart rate 	Less tolerance for physical activity, low blood pressure, worsening of asthma symptoms

Medication:	Also Called:	They Work By:	Possible Side Effects:
Spironolactone	Aldactone (Spironolactone) Eplerenone (Inspra)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blocks sodium and water reabsorption • Helps prevent further damage to the heart • At low doses (12.5 - 50mg) is not used as a water pill 	Lethargy, drowsiness, fatigue, diarrhea, cramps, high potassium, low sodium
Cardioglycoside	Digoxin (Lanoxin)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helps your heart pump • Increases your heart's strength • Helps symptoms and helps keep you out of the hospital 	Loss of appetite, a bad taste in the mouth, nausea or vomiting, impaired kidney function, headaches, skipped heartbeats, rapid breathing
Diuretics	Bumetanide (Bumex) Furosemide (Lasix) Hydrochloro-thiazide (Hydrodiuril) Torsemide (Demedex)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Water Pill" • Gets rid of excess water in your legs, feet, and lungs 	Fatigue, low blood pressure, poor kidney function, low potassium levels
Angiotensin II Receptor Antagonists	Candesartan (Atacand) Irbesartan (Avapro) Losartan (Cozaar) Valsartan (Diovan)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opens up vessels of the heart • Makes it easier for the heart to pump • Helps the heart muscle work better • Can lower blood pressure 	No significant effects observed, but the drugs are still under investigation

Medication	Also Called:	They Work By:	Possible Side Effects:
Vasodilators	Hydralazine/ (Apresoline) Nitrates: *Isosorbide Dinitrate (Isordil) *Isosorbide mononitrate (Imdur) *Nitroglycerin patch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opens up vessels of the heart • Makes it easier for the heart to pump • Helps the heart muscle work better • Can lower blood pressure 	Fainting or dizziness, headaches, flushing, heart palpitations, nasal congestion
Calcium Channel Blockers	Amlodipine (Norvasc) Diltiazem * (Cardizem) Felodipine* (Plendil) Verapamil* (Calan)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helps the heart muscle work better • Can lower blood pressure 	Headaches, facial flushing, dizziness, ankle swelling
Blood Thinners	Aspirin Clopidogrel (Plavix) Ticlopidine (Ticlid) Warfarin (Coumadin)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thins out blood • Decreases your chance of having a heart attack or stroke • Your blood will need to be monitored monthly 	Increased risk of bleeding, easy bruising
Anti-Arrhythmics	Amiodarone Dofetilide Sotalol	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helps your heart pump better • Helps keep heart in a regular rhythm 	Dizziness, numbness, tingling in arms, facial flushing, headache, nausea, shortness of breath
Potassium Chloride and Magnesium Chloride	K-Dur Slow-Mag	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May be affected by your other medications • May need a supplement 	High potassium, high magnesium, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, diarrhea

****These medicines should be avoided if you have heart failure from poor pumping function. Discuss this with your doctor.***

Nutrition & Diet:

The goals for your diet are to:

- 1. Lower sodium (salt) in the diet** to help lower edema (swelling).
- 2. Eat fruits & vegetables daily.**
- 3. Prevent gastric distress.** You may need small meals with snacks and/or may need to avoid foods that cause distress.
- 4. Restrict caffeine intake** in the acute phase.
- 5. Eat a well-balanced diet** to ensure you get all the vitamins and minerals you need.

Quick tips to get you started:

Leave the salt shaker off the table and do not cook with salt. Try experimenting with spices and fresh lemon. Look for salt-free seasoning blends in your grocery store spice section.

- 1 teaspoon salt = 2,000 mg sodium
- 1 teaspoon baking soda = 821 mg sodium
- 1 teaspoon baking powder = 339 mg sodium
- 1 teaspoon MSG = 492 mg sodium

Learn to read food labels to avoid foods high in sodium. *See information on page 13.*

Purchase fresh and frozen vegetables or vegetables canned without salt. If you have regular canned vegetables, rinse the vegetables and cook in a large amount of water to remove some of the salt.

Bake, broil, boil, steam, roast, or poach foods without salt. Add vegetables and herbs for seasonings

Don't buy convenience foods such as skillet dinners, deli foods, cold cuts, hot dogs, and canned soups. They are all high in salt.

When you eat out, order baked, broiled, steamed, or poached foods without breading, butter, or sauces. Also ask that no salt be added. Go easy on the salad dressing. Most are high in salt. Ask for oil & vinegar for your salad or lemon wedges.

Stay away from "fast" foods. Most are high in salt. Cook from scratch whenever possible.

Eat:	Instead of:
1 cup of cooked, fresh or frozen green beans: 5 mg of sodium	1 cup of canned green beans: 340 mg of sodium
½ cup of cooked rice: 2 mg of sodium	½ cup of Rice-a-Roni, Rice Pilaf : 1220 mg of sodium

Foods Allowed:	Foods to Avoid:
Milk & Milk Products: Limit milk to 16oz./day Any milk - whole, low fat, skim milk; or chocolate; cocoa; yogurt; eggnog; milk shake; 8 oz. milk substitute	Buttermilk (Make salt free buttermilk by adding 1-tablespoon lemon juice to 1 cup of milk, let sit till thicken.)
Cheese: Limit to ½ cup or 1 oz. Dry curd cottage cheese; low fat or skim milk ricotta; farmer cheese; part-skim mozzarella; Neufchatel	Regular cheeses and cheese spreads
Vegetables (2+ servings): Fresh or frozen vegetables without sauces; low-sodium canned vegetables and juices; white or sweet potatoes; salt free potato chips	Regular canned vegetables and vegetable juices; sauerkraut; pickled vegetables and other prepared products that use brine; frozen vegetables in sauce; potato chips
Fruit (2+ servings): All fruits, canned fresh or frozen and fruit juices	None
Breads, cereal or pasta (6-11 servings): Breads (all types), rolls and salt free crackers; pasta, rice, and noodles cooked without salt; cooked cereal without salt, dry low-sodium cereals; shredded wheat, puffed rice & wheat	Breads and rolls with salted tops; quick breads, instant hot cereals; dry cereals with added sodium, regular crackers; instant hot cereals
Meats or Substitutes (6oz./day): Any fresh or fresh-frozen meats, fish, poultry or game meat; low-sodium canned tuna, sardines or salmon; eggs; low sodium cheese; dried peas and beans, not canned; low-sodium peanut butter; salt free nuts and tofu	Any meat, fish or poultry that is smoked, cured, salted or canned - bacon, chipped beef, corned beef, cold cuts, ham, hot dogs, and sausage; regular canned tuna or salmon; pickled eggs; regular hard and processed cheese; cheese spreads; regular peanut butter
Fats: Unsalted butter or margarine; unsalted salad dressings; vegetable oil, shortening; mayonnaise; light or sour cream	Regular butter or margarine; commercial salad dressings

<p>Sweets and Desserts: Any sweets and desserts made without salt. Desserts made from milk should be made from milk allowance. Frozen juice bars; fruit ice; sorbet; sherbet; jelly; jam; preserves; plain cookies; animal crackers; ginger snaps, etc.</p>	<p>Prepared mixes, store-bought pies, cakes & muffins. Baked goods made with baking powder or soda</p>
<p>Beverages: All beverages; limit caffeine. If you have a water softener, obtain water for drinking and cooking before it is processed</p>	<p>Commercially softened water; beverages and foods made with commercially softened water; sports drinks; canned tomato or vegetable juice, unless salt free</p>
<p>Soups: Low sodium commercial canned or dehydrated soups; homemade soups with meat, fresh or frozen vegetables and/or allowed milk, and cooked without salt</p>	<p>Regular bouillon, broth, or consommé; regular canned or dried commercial soups</p>
<p>Seasonings: Salt substitute (with physician's approval); pepper; herbs; spices; flavorings; vinegar; lemon & lime juice; salt-free seasoning mixes</p>	<p>Garlic, celery, onion, seasoned, kosher, and any other seasoning salt; sodium compounds such as MSG – Accent</p>
<p>Condiments: Low sodium condiments – ketchup, chili sauce, mustard, pickles, Tabasco sauce, low-sodium baking powder</p>	<p>Ketchup, chili sauce, mustard, pickles, relishes, olives, horseradish, gravy & sauce mixes, barbecue sauce, soy, teriyaki sauce, Worcestershire, and steak sauce</p>
<p>Snack Items: Unsalted snacks – nuts, seeds, pretzels, popcorn</p>	<p>Salted nuts, seeds, pretzels, and popcorn. All regular commercially prepared convenience foods</p>

Note: When shopping for frozen dinners or convenience meals, choose items that provide 600mg or less per serving. Sodium levels can be found on the nutrition foods labels on the box.

Should I Eat Foods That are High in Potassium?

Potassium is an important mineral needed for proper muscle function. However if you are taking Spironolactone, an ACE Inhibitor, an ARB, or your kidneys do not function normally (see medication list on pages 7-9), you may need to limit foods high in potassium.

High potassium foods include: bananas, cantaloupes, scallops, brussel sprouts, apricots, peaches, carrots, spinach, artichokes, tomatoes, oranges, broccoli, grapefruit, watermelon, potatoes, and honeydew.

Reading Food Labels

The “Nutrition Facts” label lists sodium in milligrams (mg). When reading labels, try to choose foods that contain less than 300 mg of sodium. Main-dish entrees, such as TV dinners, should contain less than 600 mg.

The following is a sample nutritional label. Always check to see how many “servings” are in the food product. **Note: If you eat a portion greater than 1 serving size, you end up with more salt intake than what is listed on the label.**

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 1 cup (228g) Servings Per Container 2	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 250	Calories from Fat 110
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 12g	18%
Saturated Fat 3g	15%
Trans Fat 3g	
Cholesterol 30mg	10%
Sodium 470mg	20%
Potassium 700mg	20%
Total Carbohydrate 31g	10%
Dietary Fiber 0g	0%
Sugars 5g	
Protein 5g	
Vitamin A	4%
Vitamin C	2%
Calcium	20%
Iron	4%
* Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your Daily Values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.	
	Calories: 2,000 2,500
Total Fat	Less than 65g 80g
Sat Fat	Less than 20g 25g
Cholesterol	Less than 300mg 300mg
Sodium	Less than 2,400mg 2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate	300g 375g
Dietary Fiber	25g 30g

Start Here →

Check Calories

Limit these Nutrients

Get Enough of these Nutrients

Footnote

Quick Guide to % DV

- 5% or less is Low
- 20% or more is High

Limiting Fluids

Many doctors suggest that people with heart failure limit their total fluid intake per day. This includes fluids taken with medicines. Here are some examples of fluids and foods that count as part of your fluid total:

Fluids	Foods
Water, juice, tea, soda, coffee, ice cubes, soup, milk	Yogurt, pudding, ice cream, Jell-O, juices in fruits (1 orange or ½ grapefruit counts as 4 oz. of fluid)

To Help You Measure:

1 cup = 8 oz. = 240 cc

4 cups = 32 oz. = 1 qt. = 1000 cc = 1 liter

8 cups = 64 oz. = 2 qt. = 2000 cc = 2 liters

1 ml = 1 cc

1 oz. = 30 cc

**8 ounces of ice = 4 ounces of water.*

YOUR FLUID RESTRICTION IS _____

What Can I Do When I Get Thirsty?

Being thirsty is very common. This does not mean that your body needs more fluid. You have to be careful not to replace the fluid that diuretics have helped take out of your body.

- Use ice chips or just rinse your mouth.
- Freeze juice in an ice cube tray.
- Use a lemon wedge, hard candies, chewing gum, frozen grapes or strawberries instead of drinking.

Remember to save some fluids to take with your medicine. Many people find it helpful to fill a pitcher with 48 ounces of water in the morning. Each time you drink any fluid, pour that amount out of the pitcher. When the pitcher is empty, you have used up all of the fluids you should have for the day (if your fluid restriction is 48 ounces or 6 cups).

Caffeine and High Salt Drinks

- Limit the intake of coffee, black tea, or soda with caffeine.
- Avoid drinks high in sodium, such as tomato or vegetable juice.

Exercise

Exercise helps to condition your heart muscle and gives you more energy to perform activities throughout the day. Be sure to check with your doctor before beginning an exercise program.

Notify your doctor or nurse of dizziness, difficulty breathing, heart palpitations or extreme fatigue that occur with exercise. Do not exercise immediately after a heavy meal. Avoid extreme temperatures. Do not exercise if you are already excessively fatigued or feeling poorly.

- **Aerobic exercise** is the best type of exercise for you. This includes, walking (even walking around the block or yard counts as exercise), biking, swimming, and dancing.
- **Cardiac Rehabilitation** is a safe and effective way to exercise. An individualized exercise program is based on the results of an exercise test and is modified to fit your needs. Cardiac rehabilitation programs must be ordered by your doctor and are not always covered by health insurance.
- **Sexual Activity** is certainly a form of exercise. Despite your illness, you may continue to enjoy sexual activity with a few extra considerations. Try to be well rested. Set aside a block of time. Be sure that the room temperature is comfortable. Avoid heavy meals and alcohol. Abstain if you are otherwise not feeling well. Discuss any anxieties that you may have with your partner. Be aware that some medications and heart failure in general may affect your sexual desire and performance. If this is the case, you should speak to your doctor.

Exercise Tips

Do...

- Wear comfortable clothes and soft sole shoes with laces or sneakers.
- Start slowly. Gradually build up to 30-45 minutes of activity, three or four times per week (or whatever your doctor recommends). If you are unable to exercise for 30 minutes straight, try two 15-minute sessions to meet your goal.
- Exercise at the same time of day so it becomes a regular part of your lifestyle. For example, you might walk every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from noon to 12:30 p.m. However, don't skip your exercise if you can't make the scheduled time.
- Exercise with a friend.

Don't...

- Don't get discouraged if you have to stop due to decompensation of your heart failure. Gradually start again and work up to your old pace.
- Don't do exercises that require holding your breath, bearing down, or sudden bursts of energy.
- Don't engage in any activity that causes chest pain, severe shortness of breath, dizziness, or light-headedness. If these happen, stop what you are doing right away.
- Don't exercise right after meals or in extreme temperatures.

My Exercise Plan

I will exercise _____ times a week

I will do the following exercise activities: _____

I plan to exercise _____ minutes each session.

Managing Stress

Emotional stress and anxiety make the heart work harder, which can make symptoms worse. That is why patients and their caregivers should work together to keep stress under control.

- Learn to accept things you can't change. You do not have to solve all of life's problems.
- Don't use smoking, drinking, overeating, drugs, or caffeine to cope with stress. These will actually make things worse.
- Learn to say no. Do not promise too much. Give yourself enough time to get things done.
- Join a support group - maybe for people with heart disease, for women, for men, for retired persons, or some other group with which you identify.
- Consider a mental health professional or clergy to help you manage stress.

Avoiding Colds and Flu

Get a yearly influenza vaccine. Ask your doctor about the pneumococcal vaccine (to guard against the most common form of bacterial pneumonia).

As much as possible, avoid anyone who has a cold or the flu. Stay out of crowds during the height of the flu season. If you are around someone who has a cold or flu, be sure to wash your hands.

The Effects of Smoking

Smokers who have heart failure can automatically eliminate a major source of stress on the heart by quitting. Each puff of nicotine temporarily increases the heart rate and blood pressure. People who quit smoking are more likely to have their heart failure symptoms improve.

- Keep busy doing things that make it hard to smoke, like working in the yard, washing dishes, and being more active.

- Find a substitute to reach for instead of a cigarette. Try a hard candy.
- Make it known to family and friends that you need to quit smoking and could really use their support. If your husband, wife, son or daughter smoke, ask them to quit with you.
- Ask your doctor about smoking cessation programs. Also discuss using medications that can help you quit smoking.

Other Ways to Improve Heart Function

- Lose weight if you are too heavy. The heart does not have to beat as hard to send blood to all parts of a slim body.
- Avoid hard exercise and lifting heavy objects to prevent sudden pumping demands on your heart. Your doctor may ask that you take daily walks or join a cardiac rehab program. Over time this may strengthen your heart muscle.
- Wear clothing that permits good blood flow in the legs. Garters or hose with tight tops may slow blood flow to your legs and cause clots.
- Avoid extreme temperatures. The body works harder to keep body temperature normal when you are too hot or too cold.
- Try to stay away from people who have colds or the flu. Ask your doctor if you should have a yearly flu shot and the one-time pneumonia shot.
- Talk with your doctor about how much alcohol (if any) is OK for you. Since alcohol weakens the heart, heart failure may improve if you stop drinking.

Planning for the Future

Advances have been made in medications to control symptoms and improve quality of life. Certain patients who qualify may be helped with cardiac transplant, cardiac assist devices, or investigational drug studies, which are ongoing.

You cannot be sure about your health or the medical care you will need in the future, but you can have control over the type of medical care you wish to receive. An Advance Directive can give you and your family peace of mind by making sure that everyone has the same understanding of your values and wishes for treatment.

An Advance Directive can guide your family and medical team in medical emergencies if you are unable to make known your wishes. An Advance Directive lets you state the care you would want if you are unable to speak for yourself. It also allows you to name someone to choose treatment for you (your agent). An Advance Directive can include:

- ◇ A living will
- ◇ A medical durable power of attorney (someone you appoint to make medical decisions)
- ◇ Cardiopulmonary (CPR) instructions
- ◇ Discussions with your family should be held regarding your feelings about organ donation.

Talking to your family and friends about your wishes can sometimes be difficult. But it is the best way to make sure you'll get the care you want. It is important to talk with them before you become seriously ill or injured.

Taking control of your illness and following the guidelines discussed in this booklet can contribute to many years of enjoyable living.

Remember, take time to enjoy your life. Stay close to family and friends who will give you support and encouragement.

Important Telephone Numbers

Person or Place	Name	Phone Number
Primary Care Physician		
Cardiologist		
Other Specialist		
Clinic Nurse		
Cardiology NP		
Home Health Nurse		
Hospital		
Pharmacy		
Nurse Case Manager		
Emergency Contact		
Equipment Company		



Summit Health Cardiology
SummitHealth.org