



Healthy Living with Heart Failure

A Patient's Guide

This guide is intended only for general information. It is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of professional medical care, but rather to aid discussion between patients and health care providers. If you have persistent health problems or if you have further questions, please talk with your health care provider.

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This guide and its forms are available for download at www.acumentra.org.

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Important Phone Numbers — When to call for help



Call _____ if...

- your ankles and legs become more swollen
- your shoes or socks get tight suddenly (one day to the next)
- you have shortness of breath that does not go away when you rest
- you gain 2 or 3 pounds in 1 day
- you gain 4 or 5 pounds in 5 days
- you suddenly do not have the energy for your normal activities
- you feel dizzy or weak
- your vision is blurred or looks yellow or blue-green
- you feel your heartbeat change (feels like a butterfly in your chest)
- you have chest pain or new discomfort in the chest
- you faint or pass out
- you have a cough that does not go away
(especially if the cough is worse when you are lying down)

Heart Care Provider

Telephone

Care Coordinator

Telephone

Home Care

Telephone

Pharmacy

Telephone

Family Member

Telephone

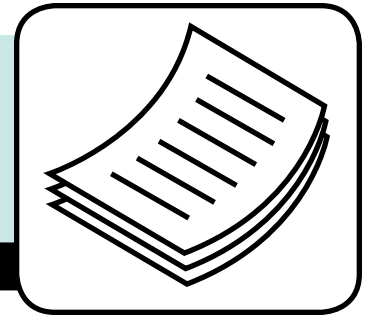
Others

Telephone

This form is available online at www.acumentra.org.



My Contract with Myself



To control my heart failure, I agree to

- ♡ take my medicine as prescribed
- ♡ avoid salt and high-salt foods
- ♡ weigh myself daily
- ♡ rest between activities
- ♡ pace myself when exercising
- ♡ follow the diet my heart care team recommends
- ♡ call my heart care provider immediately if I
 - ♡ gain weight suddenly or have increased swelling
 - ♡ feel new side effects from my medicines
 - ♡ am short of breath or have a cough
 - ♡ do not feel well for any reason

Signature _____ Date _____



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Understanding Heart Failure



Heart failure is one of the most common heart problems. This guide answers questions you may have about heart failure and explains how you can help yourself to live well with it.

What is heart failure?

Heart failure means that your heart is having difficulty pumping enough blood to meet the needs of the rest of your body. If you have heart failure,

- fluid may back up into your lungs, making it hard to breathe (especially when you lie down)
- fluid may collect in your ankles and legs causing swelling
- you may feel more weak or tired than usual when you exercise, or at other times

What causes heart failure?

There are many causes of heart failure, but all of them involve one or more parts of the heart that does not work well. The most common causes of heart failure are

- weakening of the heart muscle after a heart attack
- weakening of the heart muscle from a viral infection, an inherited (genetic) defect, or another cause
- having high blood pressure for many years, causing a “stiff heart”
- drinking too much alcohol for many years
- a heart valve that doesn’t work well—either “leaky” or too narrow



Understanding Heart Failure

Heart failure can also be caused by very slow or very fast heartbeat, or by a rapid, irregular heartbeat called atrial fibrillation. Heart failure is sometimes caused by an overactive thyroid gland, by medicines, or by other illnesses.

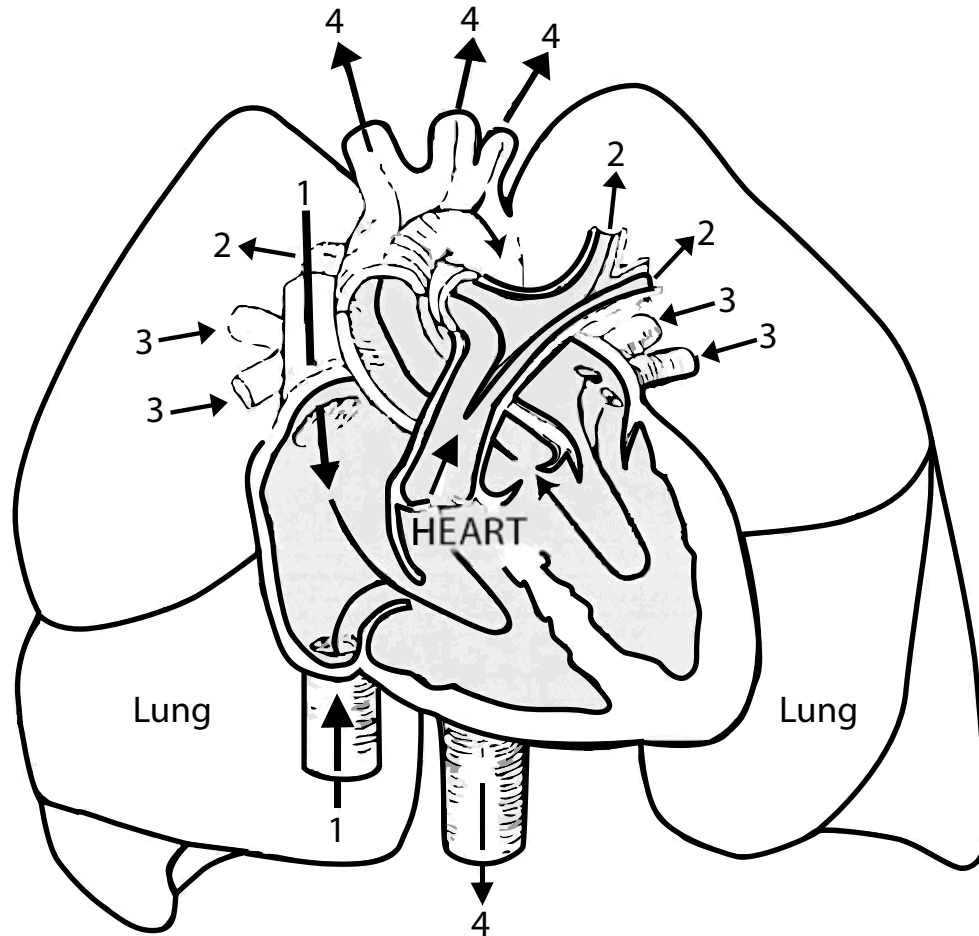
There is no cure for heart failure, but there are medicines you can take and things that you can do to help your heart work better. This guide talks about changes you can make that can help you continue to live an enjoyable and productive life.

The key to living well with heart failure is to have a great heart care team that is working together to keep you healthy: you, your heart care provider and his or her office staff, your pharmacist, your family, and other health care professionals.

Understanding Heart Failure



How blood moves through the heart



1. Blood without oxygen flows from the body into the right side of the heart.
2. Heart pumps blood without oxygen into the lungs.
3. Blood picks up oxygen in the lungs and flows into the left side of the heart.
4. Heart pumps blood with oxygen back to the body.



Understanding Heart Failure

What are the symptoms of heart failure?

The most common symptoms are listed below. These are caused by excess fluid build-up or the inability of the heart to pump enough blood to the muscles or brain.

Because these symptoms may also be caused by problems other than heart failure, it is important that you consult your heart care provider if you experience them. He or she can find out the cause and give you the proper treatment for your symptoms.

Shortness of breath and cough

When the heart does not pump well, the body builds up fluid in the lungs, which may make it difficult for you to breathe. Shortness of breath may be worse during certain activities, such as walking up stairs, or it may be worse when you lie flat.

Sitting quietly or sleeping on two or three pillows may make breathing easier. Occasionally, heart failure causes a cough that doesn't go away. The cough tends to be worse at night.

Swelling of the feet, ankles, and legs

The body may also collect extra fluid in your feet, ankles, and legs. This leads to swelling and the sensation that your shoes and socks are too tight. The swelling usually starts in your feet and ankles and is worse in the evening than in the morning. As more and more fluid builds up, the swelling may gradually move up your legs as high as your waist. Both legs usually swell, although one may swell more than the other.

Understanding Heart Failure



Weight gain

When your body holds onto extra salt and water, your weight goes up. This may happen very quickly (up to 2 or 3 pounds in a day) or more slowly over a period of weeks.

Talk with your heart care provider about your “target weight.” The best way to keep your heart failure under control is to know your target weight, weigh yourself daily, and have a plan for what to do if your weight goes above the target.

Tiredness or weakness

You may feel more tired than usual if your heart is working extra hard to pump blood and oxygen to your brain and muscles. You may notice that you do not have enough energy for your normal activities. If you suddenly feel weak or more tired, call your heart care provider.



What You Can Do to Take Care of Yourself

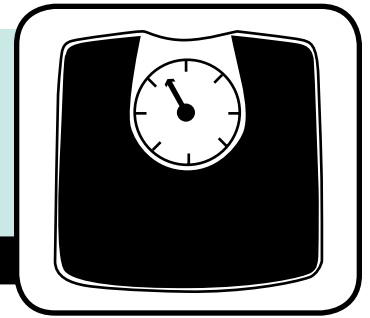
The basics

Although there is no real cure for heart failure, treatment helps nearly everyone feel better. Here are several important things you can do to help keep your heart failure under control and help yourself feel better.

1. Always take your medicines.

- Follow the plan that you and your heart care team have developed.
- Try not to miss doses. A pill box with three or four sections for different times of each day may help you take your medicines at the right times.
- If you miss a dose, do not take two doses at once (don't try to catch up).
- Write down the medications you take on your Medication Schedule. Bring your Medication Schedule and your pill bottles when you visit your heart care provider.
- Talk with your heart care team if you
 - Think your medicines are making you feel bad
 - Have trouble following the plan
 - Have trouble paying for your medicines
 - Have other questions about your medicines
- Be sure to tell your heart care provider about any herbs, vitamins, and other medicine you take with or without a prescription, to make sure they will not keep your medicines from working or cause other symptoms.

What You Can Do to Take Care of Yourself



2. Follow your diet closely.

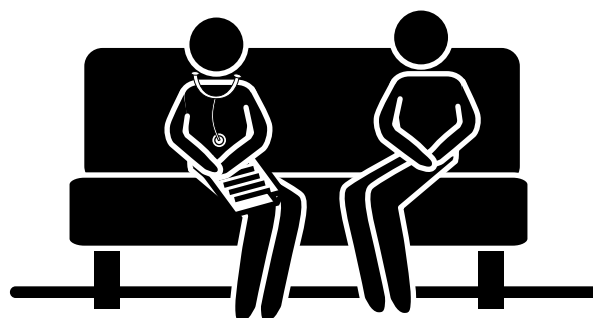
- “Cheating” on your diet (like eating lots of salty food) is risky. Too much salt can make your heart worse and lead to a trip to the emergency room. If you are unsure whether certain foods are “okay,” please ask your heart care team.
- Salt substitutes may contain too much potassium. Talk with your provider before using them.

3. Weigh yourself every day.

- Weigh yourself on the same scale every morning after urinating (peeing) and before eating. Be sure your scale is flat on the floor—not on a rug.
- Record your weight on your Daily Weight Diary. Bring your Daily Weight Diary with you when you visit your heart care provider.
- Gaining weight quickly almost always means that you have fluid building up and should call your heart care provider.

4. Get flu and pneumococcal vaccinations.

- Get your flu shot in early fall every year (before flu season starts).
- Get a pneumonia shot. You can get this any time of year.





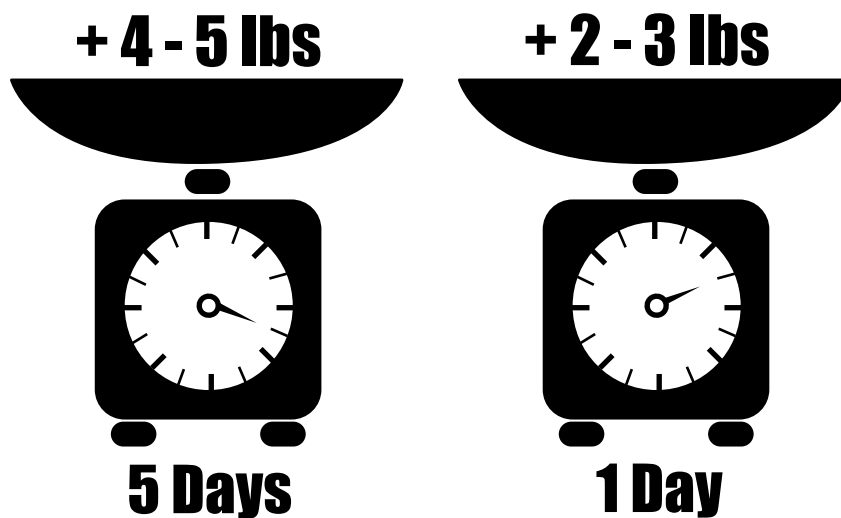
What You Can Do to Take Care of Yourself

5. Call your heart care provider if you begin feeling worse, or if any of the following problems occur:

- sudden weight gain (2 to 3 pounds in 1 day)
- weight gain of 4 to 5 pounds over 5 days
- loss of appetite with weight loss
- increased shortness of breath, especially when lying down
- increased swelling of the legs
- a cough that does not go away
- any new side effects from your medicines

Getting help early may prevent a trip to the hospital.

Remember, whenever you feel worse, ask your heart care provider for help.



Medication Schedule*

Name _____ Date _____

- Take your medicines according to your heart care provider's instructions.
- If you miss a dose, do not take two doses at once.
- Do not skip doses unless your heart care provider tells you to do so.
- Tell your heart care provider if you think you have side effects.
- Do not stop any medications without your heart care provider's instructions.
- Store all medications in original containers away from heat and light.
- Keep all medications out of the reach of children.

Medicine, Dose, and Instructions	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner	Bedtime

*Suggestion: Make copies of this page before using.
This form is available online at www.acumentra.org.

Daily Weight Diary*

Name _____

Weight at last heart care provider visit _____ Date _____

Weight at the end of last month _____ Date _____

Month _____

Date	Weight	Date	Weight	Date	Weight
1		12		23	
2		13		24	
3		14		25	
4		15		26	
5		16		27	
6		17		28	
7		18		29	
8		19		30	
9		20		31	
10		21			
11		22			

- Weigh yourself on the same scale every morning before eating and after urinating (peeing). Be sure your scale is on a hard floor—not on a rug. Write your weight on this chart or on a calendar every day.
- At the beginning of each month, enter your weight from the end of the last month at the top of the chart under “Weight at the end of last month.”
- Bring this Daily Weight Diary with you when you visit your heart care provider.

NOTE: If you gain 2 to 3 pounds in 1 day or 4 to 5 pounds in 5 days, follow the plan you and your heart care provider developed. You may have a plan to take extra medicines or to call your provider.

*Suggestion: Make copies of this page before using.

This form is available online at www.acumentra.org.

My Heart Care Plan

Name _____ Date _____

To feel your best, it is important that you understand and follow these directions.
(Ask your heart care provider to fill out this page and talk with you about it.)

Medications

Diuretic: _____

ACE inhibitor or ARB: _____

Hormone blocker: _____

Beta blocker: _____

Other medicines: _____

Special instructions:

Activity

Diet

Sodium limit: _____ milligrams (mg) per day

Weight

Target weight: _____

What to do if your weight goes up 2 or 3 pounds in
1 day or 4 or 5 pounds in 5 days:



Lifestyle Changes

Your heart care provider will probably recommend some changes in your daily activities, exercise, and diet. You and your provider will need to work out a plan that you can follow.

Activity

Your provider will help you develop a personalized activity plan. You may need to bathe, shave, shower, and dress at a slow pace, with rest periods in between (sitting for 20 to 30 minutes). As your medications start to work and you begin to feel better, you will probably be able to be more active.

Exercise

Regular exercise, such as walking or swimming, helps to keep the heart strong, helps you stay calm, and controls weight and blood pressure. Your heart care team will work with you to develop a plan for exercising safely and increasing your exercise as you get stronger.

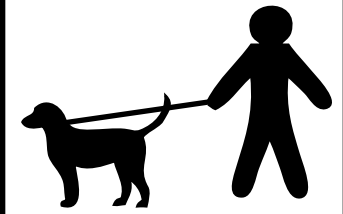
When you exercise, follow these important guidelines:

1. Pace yourself. Regular exercise should not wear you out. It should increase your ability to do more.
2. Start with warm-up exercises.
3. Do not exercise immediately after meals.
4. Do not exercise in extreme heat or cold.
5. Stop exercising **IMMEDIATELY** if you have chest pain, are very short of breath, or do not feel well.

Stop smoking

If you smoke, quit. Smoking is bad for everybody's heart and is worse if you have heart failure. Most people who smoke need help when they decide to quit. Ask your heart care provider to help you quit.

Lifestyle Changes



Diet

Your heart care provider will probably recommend a low-salt (low-sodium) diet. Salt makes the body hold on to water and may lead to fluid build-up. Your heart care team can give you more information about what to eat and what to avoid and help you plan a diet that you can follow. (See the Resource List for additional information.)

Ask your heart care provider how many milligrams (mg) of salt (sodium) you can have each day. A low-salt diet usually allows 1,500 mg to 2,000 mg of sodium.

In planning your diet, remember to read the label on packaged and canned foods for information on sodium (salt) content. Check the amount, not just the percentage.

Sample label for one frozen meal

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 1 meal (227g)	
Servings Per Container 1	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 390 Calories from Fat 130	
% Daily Value	
Total Fat 14g	22%
Saturated Fat 2.5g	13%
Cholesterol 20mg	7%
Sodium 560mg	23%
Potassium 230mg	7%
Total Carbohydrate 56g	19%
Dietary Fiber 3g	12%
Sugars 20g	
Protein 10g	15%

milligrams of sodium per serving



Lifestyle Changes

Choosing low-sodium foods

The foods listed below tend to contain large amounts of salt (sodium) and should be avoided. Always check labels and ask restaurant servers for information about sodium.

- boxed foods and dinners (such as macaroni and cheese)
- breaded fish or seafood
- canned meats or fish
- processed cheeses
- cottage cheese and cheese spreads
- salted chips and salted crackers
- tomato sauce and vegetable juices
- soy sauce
- packaged cereals
- “deli” foods, such as coleslaw, potato salad, and macaroni salad
- premixed gravies and processed foods
- prepared meats, such as hot dogs, bologna, ham, and salami
- soups and canned vegetables
- Asian restaurant food
- “fast food”
- pickled vegetables, sauerkraut
- pickles and olives

Lifestyle Changes



Some prepared foods are available in lower-sodium versions, but these may still have too much salt for you. If you don't know the sodium content of a particular food, ask your heart care team.

Fresh fruits, vegetables, plain tofu, poultry, fish, and meats are naturally low in sodium. Safe seasonings include herbs, lemon juice, pepper, and garlic.

Important tips for meal planning

- Check with your heart care provider before using a salt substitute and follow his or her advice.
- When buying seasoned or prepared food at the fish or meat counter or from the deli, be sure to request information about the sodium content.
- Frozen, prepared, packaged, and canned foods often contain a lot of sodium. Most frozen meals, including meals labeled “healthy” or “lean,” have 550 to 1000 mg of sodium for an 8 to 10-ounce serving.
- One teaspoon of salt equals about 2,400 mg of sodium.

Caution: Be sure to read the sodium (salt) content on the label. Many “low sodium” or “healthy” foods still have too much sodium for a person with heart failure.



Diagnosing Heart Failure

After asking you about your symptoms and examining you, your doctor will usually be able to tell whether you have heart failure. Often a chest x-ray will confirm the diagnosis.

Your doctor may recommend additional tests to measure your heart function, find out the cause of your heart failure, and decide which medicines are best for your heart. Commonly used heart tests:

- **Electrocardiogram (EKG or ECG):** This test tracks your heartbeat to learn whether you have had a heart attack or have a problem with your heart rhythm.
- **Echocardiogram (“echo”):** This sound-wave picture of your heart gives information about how well your heart muscle is pumping and whether you have a problem with your heart valves.
- **Holter monitor:** This is a special monitoring device that you wear on your chest for hours or days to record changes in the regularity of your heartbeat.
- **Stress test:** This is used to find out if important heart arteries are narrowed or blocked. The most common test is the “treadmill” test, which monitors the heart rhythm while the patient walks on a treadmill. Other tests use medicines instead of exercise.
- **Cardiac catheterization (angiogram, arteriogram, or “cath”):** This test may be needed to find out whether any of your heart arteries are blocked. A small plastic tube is passed into the heart and dye is put into the heart to show blood moving through the heart. Although it sounds scary, it is a very safe test.

Talk with your heart care provider if you have questions about these or other tests your provider recommends for you.

Treating Heart Failure



Medications

Many medications can help your heart pump better and make you feel better. The following medicines are commonly used to treat heart failure:

Diuretic (water pill)

Action: A diuretic helps your body get rid of extra salt and water, which means that you'll urinate (pee) a larger amount and more often. Taking a diuretic early in the day works best for most people. People without heart failure may take a diuretic to lower their blood pressure.

Side effects: Call your heart care provider if you experience dizziness, lightheadedness, increasing weakness, or leg cramps.

Common diuretics	
Brand Name	Generic Name
Lasix	furosemide
Bumex	bumetanide
Esidrix	hydrochlorothiazide (HCTZ)
Dyaside Maxzide	triamterene-HCTZ
Zaroxolyn	metolazone
Hygroton	chlorthalidone
	indapamide



Treating Heart Failure

ACE inhibitor and ARB

Action: An ACE (angiotensin-converting enzyme) inhibitor or angiotensin receptor blocker (ARB) makes it easier for your heart to pump by relaxing the arteries and veins and lowering your blood pressure. It also protects kidneys from damage.

Do not take an ACE inhibitor if you think you are pregnant.

Side effects: Call your heart care provider if you get headache, dry cough, vomiting, diarrhea, nausea, or dizziness or lightheaded when sitting or standing, or increased weakness.

Rare: If you experience swelling of your face, mouth, hands, or feet or if you have difficulty breathing or swallowing, contact your heart care provider immediately.

Common ACE inhibitors and ARBs
Generic Name
ACE inhibitors
captopril
enalapril
lisinopril
fosinopril
benazepril
quinapril
ARBs
losartan
valsartan
candesartan
irbesartan
telmisartan
olmesartan

Treating Heart Failure



Aldosterone antagonist (blocker)

Action: An aldosterone blocker is used for some people with heart failure to help the body get rid of extra salt and water and to improve heart function. It also prevents loss of potassium in the urine, which makes it helpful for patients who needs to take a diuretic.

Side effects: Call your heart care provider if you feel a change in your heart rhythm or have breast enlargement. Your provider will monitor your potassium carefully if you also take an ACE inhibitor, ARB, or potassium chloride.

Common aldosterone blockers	
Brand Name	Generic Name
Aldactone	spironolactone
Inspra	eplerenone

Beta blocker

Action: A beta blocker may be used to block the harmful effects of adrenalin and protect the heart.

Side effects: People most often have side effects when they first start the drug, but only a few have to stop taking it. Call your heart care provider if you get dizzy or feel lightheaded, are wheezing or coughing more, or have a slow pulse or other change in your heartbeat.

NOTE: Always take carvedilol with food.

Common beta blockers	
Brand Name	Generic Name
Coreg	carvedilol
Lopressor Toprol	metoprolol
	bisoprolol



Treating Heart Failure

Digoxin

Action: Digoxin, a medicine made from the foxglove (digitalis) plant, is used most often to slow the heart rate during an irregular heart rhythm called atrial fibrillation.

NOTE: Check with your heart care provider about foods or other medicines that may not work well with digoxin.

Side effects: Call your heart care provider if you lose your appetite, get a bad taste in your mouth, or have nausea or vomiting, diarrhea, unusual tiredness or weakness, yellowish or blue-green vision, dizziness or lightheadedness, confusion, or an irregular heartbeat.

Common digitalis medicines	
Brand Name	Generic Name
Lanoxin	digoxin

Vasodilator

Action: Vasodilators make it easier for your heart to pump by relaxing the arteries and veins. They can also quickly lower your blood pressure.

Side effects: Call your heart care provider if you experience dizziness or lightheadedness, blurred vision, or confusion, or if you pass out. Other side effects may also occur. Ask your heart care provider if there is anything else that you need to be aware of.

Common vasodilators	
Brand Name	Generic Name
Transderm Nitro Nitrodur Nitrostat	nitroglycerin (also used to treat chest pain)
Isordil (Sorbitrate)	isosorbide dinitrate
Monoket Ismo Imdur	isosorbide mononitrate
Apresoline	hydralazine

Treating Heart Failure



Cholesterol-lowering medicine

Action: Cholesterol-lowering medicines may reduce the risk of dying, the risk of heart attack, and the need for heart surgery (coronary bypass and balloon angioplasty procedures).

NOTE: It's okay to take cholesterol-lowering medicines with your heart failure medicines.

Side effects: Ask your heart care provider or pharmacist for a list of possible side effects for the cholesterol-lowering medicine you take.

Rare: If you feel any unexplained muscle pain, muscle tenderness, or muscle weakness, call your heart care provider immediately.

Common cholesterol-lowering medicines	
Brand Name	Generic Name
Lipitor	atorvastatin
Lescol	fluvastatin
Mevacor	lovastatin
Pravachol	pravastatin
Crestor	rosuvastatin
Zocor	simvastatin
Advicor	lovastatin + niacin SR
Vytorin	simvastatin + ezetimibe
	niacin (Vitamin B3)
	fibrates



Treating Heart Failure

Questions about your medicines

The previous pages include only the most commonly used medicines. Depending on the cause of your heart failure, your heart care provider may recommend other or newer medications as they become available.

Call your provider if you have any questions about your medications.

Remember: Be sure to tell your provider about any herbs, vitamins, and other medicine you take with or without a prescription, to make sure they will not keep your heart failure medicines from working or cause other symptoms.

Other treatment

Sometimes heart failure cannot be controlled well with medications alone and may require additional treatment. You may need heart surgery if you have blocked arteries or a narrowed or leaky heart valve.

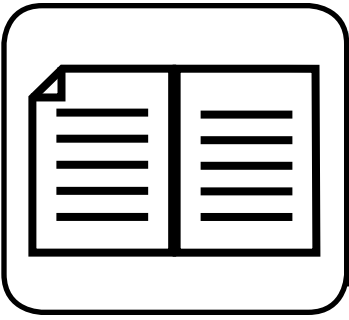
Long-term outlook

Although there is no cure for heart failure, with the right medicines and lifestyle changes, most people can live a good life with heart failure for many years. You and your heart care team will develop a treatment plan especially for you.

Glossary



artery	a blood vessel that carries blood and oxygen away from the heart to parts of the body
atrial fibrillation	rapid, irregular beating of the heart
balloon angioplasty	using a balloon to stretch a narrow section of a coronary (heart) artery
cardiomyopathy	a condition in which the heart is weakened, which may be due to a number of causes (for example, heart attack, inherited abnormality, viral infection, chemical injury)
catheter	a tubular instrument that is used in studies to look at heart arteries and heart muscle function
coronary bypass	surgery that uses a vein from the leg or an artery from the chest to carry blood around (bypass) a blockage in a heart artery
edema	the build-up of excessive fluid in the feet, legs, or lungs; another word for swelling
regurgitation	the backward flow of blood through an abnormally functioning or “leaky” heart valve
stenosis	the narrowing of a heart valve
vein	a blood vessel that carries blood to the heart



Resource List

The following list is provided as a service and does not constitute an endorsement of any of the organizations by Acumentra Health. Acumentra Health is not responsible for the content. Materials were reviewed in June 2011. TinyURL (see below) will open web pages that have longer addresses.

Low-sodium diet

How to Follow a Low-Sodium Diet
Heart Failure Society of America
www.hfsa.org/pdf/module2.pdf

Low-Sodium Diet Guidelines
Cleveland Clinic
tinyurl.com/cleveland-diet

Heart failure

Heart Failure Education Materials (for people with heart failure, families, and people at risk of heart failure)
Heart Failure Society of America
tinyurl.com/hfsociety

About Heart Failure
American Heart Association
tinyurl.com/hf-aha
Phone information: national: 1-800-242-8721
Oregon affiliate: 1-800-452-9445

Publications available in local and online bookstores

American Heart Association Low-Fat, Low Cholesterol Cookbook

American Heart Association Low-Salt Cookbook

American Heart Association Quick and Easy Cookbook

American Heart Association's Your Heart: An Owner's Manual

Resource List



Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ)

Living with Heart Disease: Is It Heart Failure?

Consumer Guideline No. 11 (AHRQ Publication. No. 94-0614)

www.ahrq.gov/consumer (under “Health Conditions/Diseases,” select “Consumer Versions of Clinical Practice Guidelines”)

Useful websites

www.acumentra.org

A health care quality resource for Medicare beneficiaries, health care providers, and physicians. Funded by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS).

www.heartfailure.org

Heart Failure Online. An educational site dedicated to heart failure patients. Sponsored by the San Diego Cardiac Center and the Sharp Foundation for Cardiovascular Research.

www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/dci (select Heart Failure in list)

Heart failure information on a site hosted by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute at the National Institutes of Health.

www.healthfinder.gov

A consumer-oriented health education site provided by the federal government; search for “heart failure.”

www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/heart

A fun site from the acclaimed PBS NOVA science series that covers heart problems and has several interactive resources.

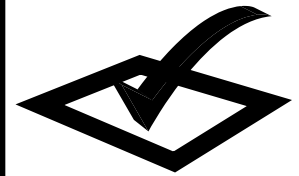
www.americanheart.org

Comprehensive resources from the American Heart Association for cardiovascular conditions, including a basic tutorial about heart failure.

www.clevelandclinic.org/heartcenter

Cleveland Clinic Heart Center. See “Diseases and Conditions” link for tutorials and links for patient education about heart failure.

Tips for Staying Out of the Hospital



Here are the most important things you can do to live a good life with heart failure:

- Eat the low-salt diet that you and your heart care team agree is best for you.
- Develop a system that works for you to take your medicines every day, every time.
- Weigh yourself every morning and record your weight.
- Follow the plan you developed with your heart care team for what to do if you gain weight, have a high salt meal, or have other problems.
- Call your heart care team as soon as possible if you have trouble taking your medicines or paying for medicines, or if you feel worse. See the sheet called Important Phone Numbers — When to call for help.



