Understanding Heart Failure

National strength.
Local focus.
Individual care.
Overview

The heart is an organ, made mostly of muscle, about the size of your fist. Its purpose is to continuously pump blood and oxygen to all parts of the body. A healthy heart beats at a rate of 60 to 80 beats per minute. Heart failure occurs when the pumping action of the heart is weakened. The blood flow is slow, and this affects the ability of other body systems to work properly. The right, left, or both sides of your heart can be affected. The left ventricle is the main pumping chamber. It is usually the first chamber to show symptoms of heart failure.

How Your Heart Works

There are four sections (chambers) of the heart. The smaller, upper chambers are the atria. The larger, lower chambers are the ventricles. The right ventricle pumps blood to the lungs. The left ventricle pumps blood to the body. Atria receive blood returning from the body to the heart. The chambers are separated by valves that control the direction of blood flow.

Ejection Fraction

Ejection fraction, commonly referred to as EF, is a measure of how much blood the left ventricle pumps out with each heartbeat. A normal EF range is 55 to 70. For example, if your EF is 60, it means that 60 percent of the blood in your left ventricle is pumped out with each heartbeat. A number between 40 and 55 may indicate heart damage, but does not necessarily mean you have heart failure. A number below 40 may confirm a heart failure diagnosis. A normal EF can be found with diastolic heart failure. If your EF is above 75, it may indicate hypertrophic cardiomyopathy. This is a thickening of the heart muscle and usually is found in younger people as a condition that is present at birth. The EF can change based on the effectiveness of treatment. EF is measured during diagnosis or when symptoms change.

An echocardiogram is the most common way to measure EF. This is a painless procedure that can be done in the office. It is an ultrasound, or picture, of the heart. Exercise or medicine may be indicated prior to testing. The heart function is measured throughout varying levels of activity.

Cardiac catheterization, MRI, CT, or MUGA scan can also be used to determine the EF. Please refer to the glossary for an explanation of these tests.

Types of Heart Failure

Systolic Heart Failure

When your heart muscle cannot tighten or push the blood out of the heart properly, it is called systolic heart failure. Left systolic heart failure is most common. As the left ventricle weakens, fluid backs up into the lungs. This can result in shortness of breath. Less blood is sent to the kidneys. The kidneys may hold water and salt and a sudden weight gain can occur. Right-sided heart failure results in swelling and weight gain, but changes occur slowly or get worse. Most people have both right and left-sided failure. In some cases, it can take years to develop noticeable symptoms.
Diastolic Heart Failure
Diastolic heart failure results from stiffening and thickening of the heart muscle. This makes it difficult for the chambers of the heart to fill with blood. Symptoms of diastolic heart failure generally occur very quickly and severely.

Stages of Heart Failure
Doctors classify stages of heart failure based on the severity of symptoms during activity. There are four categories, ranging from mild to severe. Most often, heart failure can be controlled with medicines, diet, rest and low-level exercise. Your heart failure symptoms may come and go at different times.

Recognize Symptoms of Heart Failure
The most common signs and symptoms of heart failure also occur with problems other than heart failure, so it is important to talk to your doctor if you have any of these symptoms:

- weight gain of 2-3 pounds overnight or 5 pounds in 5 days
- shortness of breath
- frequent dry, hacking cough (most often when lying down)
- tiredness - more often and more suddenly following normal activity
- swelling in the ankles, feet and legs
- swelling, bloating or pain in the abdomen
- trouble sleeping (needing two or more pillows)

Treatment Options
Treatment for heart failure depends on the cause and the severity of symptoms. Lifestyle changes and medication are common first-line treatment options. Management of high blood pressure, diabetes or thyroid disease is important. If the cause is a reparable condition, such as a heart valve replacement or blocked arteries, a procedure to fix these may improve your condition. In some cases, a pacemaker, implantable defibrillator or other assistive device can help to control your symptoms.

Heart failure can be a frightening term. It does not mean that your heart is going to suddenly stop, but it can continue to get weaker without proper treatment. Take an active role in your care. Learn about ways to manage your symptoms. You can continue to live a full and rewarding life when your condition is managed effectively.

Symptom Management
When your heart is weak and pumping action is lowered, fluid will build up in the lungs and/or other areas of the body. This is a main symptom of heart failure. Be aware of your symptoms. Report changes to your doctor. Have a plan in place in case your symptoms change. This can help prevent unneeded emergency room visits and hospitalizations. By taking charge of your health, you can improve your quality of life. It’s also important for family and those close to you to learn about symptoms of heart failure.

Symptoms and changes to watch for:

**Shortness of breath**
- increases with activity, and even when resting in severe cases

**Cough with white or pink-tinged sputum or persistent cough**
- increases when lying flat
- wakes you from sleep
- you find that you need to use more pillows

**Wheezing**
- noisy breathing

**Swelling in feet, ankles, legs or stomach**
- shoes, socks, pants are tighter

**Nausea, loss of appetite**
- may be due to fluid buildup

**Weight gain of 2-3 pounds overnight or 5 pounds in 5 days**
- unrelated to food intake
- weigh yourself first thing each morning after urinating
- keep your scale on an uncarpeted floor surface

**Increased heart rate or irregular heart-beats**

**Chest pain or tightness**

**Fatigue; feeling tired with normal activity**
- inability to walk as far as usual without shortness of breath or fatigue

**Confusion or dizziness**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Doing OK</th>
<th>Personal Notes</th>
<th>Action to take</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Symptoms are stable—No Change</td>
<td></td>
<td>Continue to monitor signs and symptoms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breathing is good, usual number of pillows to sleep, no shortness of breath</td>
<td></td>
<td>Take your medicines as directed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No weight gain or loss, no swelling in ankles or belly</td>
<td></td>
<td>Continue to weigh yourself everyday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity level unchanged</td>
<td></td>
<td>Follow a healthy, low-salt meal plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be Alert—Contact your Doctor</td>
<td></td>
<td>Be Alert—Contact your Doctor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Even if weekend or holiday</td>
<td></td>
<td>Even if weekend or holiday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weight gain of 2-3 pounds overnight or 5 pounds in 5 days</td>
<td></td>
<td>Medicines may need adjustment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cough increases/wheezing</td>
<td></td>
<td>Have your medication list available, along with pharmacy phone number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased number of pillows to sleep or you must sleep sitting up, cough increases at night or laying down</td>
<td>Name: Phone:</td>
<td>Limit activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swelling in feet or ankles</td>
<td></td>
<td>Elevate feet and legs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bloating in belly or loss of appetite</td>
<td></td>
<td>Avoid salty foods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shortness of breath increases</td>
<td></td>
<td>Pay attention if family sees changes in symptoms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fatigue easier</td>
<td></td>
<td>If unsure, contact your doctor for advice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stop activity, call your doctor right away or 911</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Stop activity, call your doctor right away or 911</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trouble breathing, unrelieved shortness of breath</td>
<td></td>
<td>Call your doctor immediately or 911</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pain or tightness in chest</td>
<td></td>
<td>Call your doctor immediately or 911</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling confused or dizzy</td>
<td></td>
<td>Call your doctor immediately or 911</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling unusual anxiety</td>
<td></td>
<td>Call your doctor immediately or 911</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worried something bad is going to happen</td>
<td></td>
<td>Call your doctor immediately or 911</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

***This information is not intended to take the place of your doctor’s advice. This information is intended for education only. Talk to your doctor to discuss your specific needs. Print copies of this form to help manage your condition.***
Help Yourself to Health
Here are some things you can do on a daily basis to control, and perhaps even improve, your heart condition.

Nutrition
Food has a major impact on health. Lots of information is available about low-fat foods for improved heart health.

Sodium
Sodium chloride is the chemical name for salt. It is used to flavor and preserve food. Salt is listed as “sodium” on the nutrition facts label. A small amount of sodium is needed by your body to work properly. But most people have too much of it in their meals. Sodium attracts fluid, so the more sodium you have in your body, the more fluid you have. And fluid buildup can cause your symptoms to get worse. The current recommendation for all people is to consume no more than 1,500 mg of sodium per day.

A few sodium facts:
- 1/2 teaspoon salt = 1,200 milligrams sodium
- the term “sodium-free” means there are less than 5 milligrams of sodium per serving
- the term “very low-sodium” means there are 35 milligrams of sodium or less per serving
- the term “low-sodium” means there are less than 140 milligrams of sodium per serving
- the term “reduced sodium” means the sodium level is reduced by 25 percent
- salt substitutes can contain potassium; talk to your doctor about using salt substitutes
- some medicines may contain sodium; talk to your pharmacist about the amount of sodium in any of your medicines

Avoid or limit the following high-sodium foods:
- fast foods
- processed and prepared frozen foods, such as frozen meals
- breads and rolls – watch total for day
- prepared pancake and muffin mixes
- boxed potatoes and pastas
- cold cuts and cured meats, such as bacon, ham, sausage and hot dogs
- instant cooked cereals, certain cold cereals
- bouillon, dry soup mix, canned soups, soy sauce, condiments
- sandwiches with deli meats or regular peanut butter
- dairy products, such as processed cheese, feta, cottage cheese, salted butter
- anything pickled
- pasta dishes with sauces or pre-seasoned mixes
- snacks such as salted nuts, pretzels and chips
- vegetable juices and canned vegetables

How to lower sodium in your food:
- do not cook with or add salt to your foods
- use fresh or frozen vegetables instead of canned (rinse canned vegetables)
- avoid prepared, processed foods such as already prepared potatoes, pasta or frozen meals
- season foods with fresh herbs or products with no salt
- cook more at home or ask for low-salt options at restaurants
- look for low-sodium salad dressings, tomato sauces, baking products and condiments
- avoid breaded meats or poultry processed in salt solutions
- use fresh chicken, turkey and tuna packed in water for sandwiches
- do not use salt substitutes unless your doctor agrees, because they can be high in potassium

Refer to the list of foods and their sodium contents on the table near the back of this booklet.
Sodium is found in many pre-packaged and processed foods. Restaurant foods are generally high in sodium. Ask about how the food is prepared. Ask for menu options without salt. Frozen foods and canned soups have a lot of sodium, so try to avoid them when possible. Rinsing canned vegetables is helpful. Be careful around holidays; hams and sausage have high salt content, as do smoked meats, deli meats and hot dogs.

Fresh fruits and vegetables are low in sodium and packed with important nutrients (vitamins, minerals and fiber). Consider speaking with a dietician to help you develop a healthy meal plan.

When eating away from home, ask questions about food preparations and the amount of sodium used. Avoid foods with 300 mg or more of sodium per serving.

Learn to check the nutrition label information on your foods. The following terms refer to sodium or sodium additives: sodium alginate, sodium ascorbate, sodium bicarbonate (baking soda), sodium benzoate, sodium caseinate, sodium chloride (table salt), sodium citrate, sodium hydroxide, sodium saccharin, sodium sulfite, disodium phosphate, sodium stearoyl lactylate, monosodium glutamate (MSG), trisodium phosphate, Na.

Potassium
Potassium is required for your heart to function correctly. Too much or too little can disturb this delicate balance and cause irregular heartbeats. People who take certain diuretics (water pills) can lose potassium in the urine. Blood tests are done to determine your potassium level. Your doctor will tell you if supplements are needed.

Most people get enough potassium just by following a well-balanced diet. Eating fruits and vegetables is the best way to get the potassium you need. Dairy products, whole grains, meat, and fish also contain potassium.

Here are some good sources of potassium:
- potatoes
- tomatoes
- avocados
- fresh fruits (bananas, oranges, and strawberries)
- orange juice
- dried fruits (raisins, apricots, prunes, and dates)
- spinach
- beans and peas

Ask your doctor if you need to take a potassium supplement. You may need to watch the amount of potassium in your diet. Changes in your potassium level may occur with certain diuretics. Blood work will be done to monitor this. Call your doctor right away if you develop:
- dry mouth
- increased thirst
- palpitations
- nausea or vomiting
- muscle cramps or pain (especially in the legs)
- unusual fatigue or weakness

Following a heart-healthy diet is an important part of managing heart failure. Ask your doctor or dietician to help create a meal plan that works for you.
Rest and Exercise
Find the right balance of exercise and rest that works best for you. Regular activity has many benefits. Talk with your doctor about types of activities that would be the most helpful to you. Walking is usually a good choice. Gentle stretching can flex muscles and help limit your risks for injury. Avoid heavy lifting. Don’t forget to warm up and cool down.

Be smart about exercise. Wait an hour after eating. Avoid extreme temperatures, and stop exercising if you develop chest pain, lightheadedness, or palpitations. Plan rest periods throughout the day.

Take a day off from exercise if you’re not feeling well, or you have had sudden weight gain.

*Talk with your doctor before beginning any type of exercise. Some forms of exercise may cause a short-term rise in your blood pressure.

Manage Stress
It is normal to feel anxious when you are diagnosed with a health condition, so try your best to keep your stress level in check. Stress causes your heart to work harder. Learn to recognize your stress triggers and symptoms. Develop ways to manage your stress. It may help to talk with family or friends.

Physical exercise helps your muscles. Relaxation exercises help your mental well-being. Consider trying yoga or tai chi.

Even with the best intentions and support, it’s common for some people to develop symptoms of depression. A change in lifestyle, taking medicine and feelings of loss can be hard to deal with. Sadness and irritability may occur from time to time, and this is normal. However, if these feelings happen every day for longer than two weeks, talk to your doctor. Take advantage of all types of support that can help you feel your best.

Intimacy
Relationships are affected in many ways when dealing with a chronic health condition. This includes sex and intimacy. Talk with your partner and share your concerns. Sex does not have to stop because of heart failure. Sex puts about the same amount of stress on your heart as walking up two flights of stairs. If you are able to maintain usual day-to-day activity without discomfort, there is no reason to avoid sexual relations. Talk to your doctor about any concerns you have.

Travel
If you are feeling well and your symptoms are controlled, heart failure should not stop you from traveling. Sitting for long periods of time is not recommended, because it can cause swelling. Walk and stretch whenever you are able. When traveling by air, be mindful that implantable devices will be detected by security screenings. Talk to the security personnel if you have an implantable device.

Always make sure you take more than enough medicine with you. Be aware of doctors and hospitals where you travel, in the event of a medical emergency. Have a list of medicines available.

Traveling across time zones may cause a mix-up in your medication dosage and times. Talk with your doctor or pharmacist about changes that may be needed.
Medicine

There are many medicines available to treat heart failure. Most people take more than one. Taking your medicines as directed is one of the most important things you can do to manage your heart failure. One of the most common reasons why people with heart failure go to the hospital is because they are not taking medicines correctly.

Talk to your doctor or pharmacist if you have questions about any medicine – including over-the-counter medicines and herbal treatments. Carry an updated list of all medicines you are taking, including prescription, over-the-counter medicines, herbs, vitamins, supplements and eye drops. This list will be helpful if you have shortness of breath and trouble speaking.

Following is a listing of types of medicine used to treat heart failure.

**Angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors and angiotensin receptor blockers (ARBs)**

**Generic ACE inhibitors:** lisinopril, enalapril, captopril, quinapril, ramipril

**Brand ACE inhibitors:** Zestril®, Vasotec®, Accupril®, Altace®

**Generic ARBs:** losartan, irbesartan

**Brand ARBs:** Avapro®, Cozaar®, Diovan®, Micardis®, Atacand®

ACE inhibitors and ARBs relax blood vessels and can lower blood pressure. This makes it easier for the heart to pump. ACE inhibitors and ARBs also help prevent or reverse changes in the shape of the heart that can occur due to heart failure.

Short-term side effects of ACE inhibitors and ARBs may include dizziness and/or weakness. Some people develop a chronic cough. If these symptoms don’t stop or get worse, let your doctor know. Your medicine or dosage can be adjusted to limit side effects.

Drugs such as ibuprofen, Motrin, Advil, or Aleve can change the way ACE inhibitors and ARBs work. Talk with your doctor before taking any over-the-counter drugs for pain.

**Beta Blockers**

**Generic beta blockers:** atenolol, carvedilol, metoprolol, propranolol

**Brand beta blockers:** Tenormin®, Coreg®, Lopressor®, Toprol XL®, Inderal®, Bystolic®

Beta blockers decrease the effects of adrenaline and other stress hormones. Arteries relax and your heartbeat slows down. Beta blockers help to improve your heart’s ability to pump blood. This can increase your ejection fraction. Most people begin taking beta blockers in a very low dose that is gradually increased. People can feel tired or dizzy due to the slower heartbeat. This will pass, but will happen again with each increase in dosage. It may take months to get to the dose of a beta blocker that best meets your specific condition. Most people feel much better in the long term.

Shortness of breath, wheezing, swelling in your feet or a sudden weight gain can occur when starting or increasing the dose of beta blockers. If you have these symptoms, contact your doctor. Your doctor may ask you to check your pulse each day and contact him/her if it gets too low.

**Note:** People with asthma must use beta blockers cautiously, as these medications may increase the risk of shortness of breath. People with diabetes need to be aware that beta blockers can hide or change symptoms of low blood sugar. Talk to your doctor if you have asthma or diabetes in addition to your heart condition.

**Digitalis**

**Generic digitalis:** digoxin

**Brand digitalis:** Lanoxin®

This medicine helps to control your heart’s rhythm. It helps to strengthen the heart so that more blood is able to be pumped with each beat. It keeps your heart working its best. Try to take this medication at the same time every day. Follow your doctor’s orders about how to take it.
Sometimes digoxin can build up in your body and cause other symptoms. Call your doctor right away if you develop:

- Loss of appetite or bad taste in your mouth
- Nausea or vomiting
- Stomach pain or diarrhea
- Extreme fatigue
- Vision changes – blue or yellow halos
- Too slow or irregular heartbeat
- Confusion

You can take this medicine with or without food; however, high-fiber foods may affect absorption. Take your medicine two hours before or after eating a high-fiber food. Take as far apart as possible from antacids, such as milk of magnesia. Talk to your pharmacist about possible food interactions when taking digitalis.

**Diuretics (“water pills”)**

*Generic loop diuretic:*
  - Furosemide, torsemide

*Brand loop diuretic:*
  - Lasix®, Demadex®

*Generic thiazide:*
  - Hydrochlorothiazide (HCTZ), metolazone

*Brand thiazide:*
  - Zaroxolyn®

*Generic potassium-sparing diuretics:*
  - Amiloride, triamterene, eplerenone, spironolactone

*Brand potassium-sparing diuretics:*
  - Inspra®, Aldactone®

Too much fluid can cause extra work for your heart. When your heart is weak, it may not be able to pump well enough, and the fluid will build up in your body.

Your doctor may prescribe a diuretic to help get rid of excess fluid. He or she may also suggest that you limit the amount of liquids you drink.

Diuretics are a valuable medicine. There are many kinds and they work in different parts of the kidney. Some prevent sodium absorption. Some increase urine output. The end result for all is that they help to get rid of excess fluid. By removing water and sodium (salt) from the body, the swelling that occurs due to heart failure is decreased.

If the increase in urine interferes with your sleep or daily activities, do not stop taking your medicine. Talk to your doctor. Plan a schedule that works better for you.

**Vasodilators**

*Generic peripheral vasodilators:*
  - Hydralazine

*Brand peripheral vasodilators:*
  - None

*Generic nitrates:*
  - Isosorbide dinitrate, isosorbide mononitrate, nitroglycerin

*Brand nitrates:*
  - Imdur®, Nitro-Dur, Minitran®

*Generic combination:*
  - Hydralazine and isosorbide dinitrate

*Brand combination:*
  - BiDil®

Vasodilators widen the blood vessels, decreasing the stress on your heart. They are generally used in combination with other medicines. Rarely are they used alone to treat heart failure.

Note: The effectiveness of nitrates may decrease after long term treatment.

**Calcium channel blockers**

*Generic calcium channel blockers:*
  - Amlodipine, diltiazem, felodipine, nifedipine, nisoldipine, verapamil

*Brand calcium channel blockers:*
  - Norvasc®, Cardizem®, Taztia®, Tiazac®, Procardia®, Sular®, Calan®, Verelan®

Calcium channel blockers slow your heart rate, lower your blood pressure and relax the heart muscle. People with diastolic heart failure benefit most from calcium channel blockers. When the heart beat is slower and the heart is more relaxed, it has more time to fill. Your doctor may have you check your pulse and call if it is too low. Call your doctor right away if you have these symptoms:

- Increased shortness of breath
- Sudden weight gain
- Swelling in the lower legs, ankles or feet.

**Common side effects:**

- Slow heart rate, causing dizziness or lightheadedness
- Constipation or diarrhea
- Flushing or feeling warm

**Other Medications**

Other heart medicines may be given to treat various types of heart conditions. These include blood thinners, such as coumadin or heparin. Aspirin, ticlopidine, clopidogrel and dipyridamole can prevent blood clots. Many people also take cholesterol-lowering medicines.
Managing Your Medicines

When you have more than one health problem, it usually means that you may need at least a few medicines. Taking your medicine is one of the most important things you can do to manage your heart failure. The more you know about your medicines, the better. Talk to your doctor, nurse or pharmacist about why you need them and how they work. They can answer any questions you have.

Here are some tips to help you manage your medicines:

- ask your doctor or pharmacist to review all of your medicines
- take your medicine as prescribed
- try to have all your prescriptions filled at the same pharmacy
- organize your medicines and keep them out of the reach of small children
- learn how to recognize side effects and how to manage them
- talk to your doctor or pharmacist if you are having trouble affording your medicines

*IMPORTANT: Even if you feel well, take your medicines as prescribed. Do not start or stop any treatment without talking to your doctor first. If you don’t feel well, ignoring the symptoms will not make them go away! Call your doctor.

Flu and Pneumonia Vaccine

Everyone is at risk for influenza (the flu).

Health experts recommend that everyone 6 months of age and older get a flu shot. The flu can affect people differently based on their ability to fight infection.

Groups at high risk of having complications from the flu include:

- pregnant women
- children younger than 5, but especially children younger than 2 years old
- People 50 years of age and older
- people of any age with chronic medical conditions such as asthma, heart disease or diabetes
- people who live in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities

Talk to your doctor about a pneumonia vaccine.

Pneumonia is an infection of the lungs. The cause is usually a bacteria or virus. This illness can be mild or severe. Vaccines are available to prevent certain types of pneumonia.

Help prevent respiratory infections by:

- washing your hands regularly
- coughing or sneezing into a tissue or into your elbow or sleeve
- cleaning hard surfaces, such as doorknobs and countertops, often
- avoiding exposure to cigarette smoke
Managing Your Condition
Understand your doctor’s directions, ask questions and repeat directions back to your doctor. Ask a family member or friend who also understands the directions to come with you.

1. Know your medicine names, dosages and what conditions they are used to treat.

2. Take your medicines every day and have a plan to remind you to take them. Use a pill box.

3. Weigh yourself every morning after you urinate. If there is a gain of 2 to 3 pounds from the day before or 5 pounds in five days, call your doctor. Think about your appetite. If you are eating less but not losing weight, your weight gain may be caused by a buildup of fluid.

4. Talk to your doctor about types of exercise appropriate for you. Walking is an excellent form of exercise.

5. Plan rest periods during your day to prevent fatigue. Rest is as important as exercise.


7. Be aware of signs of depression. People with chronic conditions often feel angry, sad or guilty. Talk with someone if you are concerned.

8. Sodium (salt) attracts fluid. Too much sodium can cause your symptoms to get worse. Your doctor may give you limits on salt intake or fluid intake. Current dietary guidelines recommend no more than 1,500mg of sodium per day. Your doctor may suggest an even lower amount. Learn which foods are high and low in sodium.

9. Maintain your blood pressure, cholesterol, blood sugar and weight within normal ranges.

10. Do not lift heavy objects, because this can put a sudden strain on your heart.

11. Avoid tight-fitting clothing and stockings/socks that can restrict blood circulation.

12. Avoid extreme temperatures that may cause your heart to work harder.

13. Don’t smoke.


15. Stay away from people with colds or flu. Wash your hands frequently.

Having heart failure requires that you take an active role in taking care of yourself. Making healthy choices can help you to feel more energetic, less stressed and in better control of your health.
Advance Care Planning
There may come a time when it is difficult or impossible for you to communicate the type and extent of care you want to receive. Advance care planning allows you to make decisions about your health care if you are unable to speak for yourself. By discussing and documenting these issues with a trusted relative or friend, you can ensure that your decisions are carried out.

The Community Conversations on Compassionate Care Program is an award-winning program. It provides “Five Easy Steps” to promote conversations that help you complete your health care proxy and living will forms. A health care proxy is someone you choose to represent your wishes if you are unable to do so yourself. A living will is a legal document that describes what kind of care you want or do not want in order to prolong your life, if it should become an issue.

To learn more about Community Conversations on Compassionate Care, call the Customer Service number listed on the back of your insurance ID card or visit our website at excellusbcbs.com.

Health Care Provider Communication
To be your healthiest, it is important to work together with your health care providers. Take an active role to participate in your care. Open communication is the key to a successful treatment plan. Ask the right questions during doctor visits, and make sure you understand the answers. Bring along a family member, friend or caregiver who can be a “second pair of ears” or take notes about what you discuss.

To prepare for your doctor visits, write down your questions before seeing the doctor. Highlight the top three questions. Know what medicines, vitamins, and nutritional supplements you are taking. Include over-the-counter products.

1. Prepare for appointments.
2. Be on time to your appointment.
3. Be detailed, but to the point, when describing your problems or concerns.
4. If you do not understand what you are told, ask the doctor to explain again using different words.
5. Make informed decisions. Ask for reading material or where you can find more information.

It is important to have confidence and trust in your doctor or health care provider. Clear communication is necessary. Heart failure is a serious condition, but it can be controlled. Take your medicines as prescribed. Be aware of lifestyle choices you make that may affect your quality of life. Manage your other health conditions. Learn everything you can about your condition so that you can be the driver of your own health improvement!
Limit Your Sodium Intake
Here is a partial list of common foods and their sodium content:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food</th>
<th>Serving</th>
<th>Sodium (mg)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sauerkraut, canned, solids and liquids</td>
<td>1 cup</td>
<td>1560</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tomato products, canned, sauce</td>
<td>1 cup</td>
<td>1284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beans, baked, canned, with pork and tomato sauce</td>
<td>1 cup</td>
<td>1106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potatoes, au gratin, dry mix, prepared with water, whole milk and butter</td>
<td>1 cup</td>
<td>1076</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fast foods, cheeseburger, regular, double patty, with condiments and vegetables</td>
<td>1 sandwich</td>
<td>1051</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soup, cream of mushroom, canned, prepared with equal volume water, commercial</td>
<td>1 cup</td>
<td>881</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheese, cottage, creamed, large or small curd</td>
<td>1 cup</td>
<td>851</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snacks, pretzels, hard, plain, salted</td>
<td>10 pretzels</td>
<td>814</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soup, tomato, canned, prepared with equal volume water, commercial</td>
<td>1 cup</td>
<td>695</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetable juice cocktail, canned</td>
<td>1 cup</td>
<td>653</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ham, sliced, extra lean</td>
<td>2 slices</td>
<td>627</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bologna, beef and pork</td>
<td>2 slices</td>
<td>417</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salami, dry or hard, pork, beef</td>
<td>2 slices</td>
<td>402</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bread stuffing, bread, dry mix, prepared</td>
<td>1/2 cup</td>
<td>543</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puddings, chocolate, dry mix, instant, prepared with 2% milk</td>
<td>1/2 cup</td>
<td>417</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beans, snap, green, canned, regular pack, drained solids</td>
<td>1 cup</td>
<td>354</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beans, snap, green, Fresh cooked, boiled, drained, without salt</td>
<td>1 cup</td>
<td>1 (yes, 1!)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peas, green, frozen, cooked, boiled, drained, without salt</td>
<td>1 cup</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pie, apple, commercially prepared, enriched</td>
<td>1 piece</td>
<td>311</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salad dressing, Italian dressing, commercial, regular</td>
<td>1 tbsp.</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bread, rye</td>
<td>1 slice</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bread, French or Vienna (includes sourdough)</td>
<td>1/2 slice</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bread, pita, white, enriched</td>
<td>4” pita</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bread, wheat (includes wheat berry)</td>
<td>1 slice</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bread, Italian</td>
<td>1 slice</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rolls, hamburger or hotdog, plain</td>
<td>1 roll</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>Serving</td>
<td>Sodium (mg)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yogurt, plain, skim milk, 13 grams protein per 8 ounce</td>
<td>8oz</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yogurt, fruit, low fat, 10 grams protein per 8 ounce</td>
<td>8oz</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egg substitute, liquid</td>
<td>1/4 cup</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egg, whole, raw, fresh</td>
<td>1 extra-large</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crackers, whole-wheat</td>
<td>4 crackers</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catsup</td>
<td>1 packet</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheese, Swiss</td>
<td>1 oz.</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ice cream, chocolate</td>
<td>1/2 cup</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ice cream, vanilla, rich</td>
<td>1/2 cup</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candies, M&amp;M®, Mars®, Milky Way Bar®</td>
<td>1 fun size bar</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broccoli, raw</td>
<td>1 cup</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melons, cantaloupe, raw</td>
<td>1 cup</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potato, baked, flesh and skin, without salt</td>
<td>1 potato</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raisins, seedless</td>
<td>1 cup</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cookies, vanilla wafers, lower fat</td>
<td>1 cookie</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applesauce, canned, sweetened, without salt</td>
<td>1 cup</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tomatoes, red, ripe, raw, year round average</td>
<td>1 tomato</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cucumber, with peel, raw</td>
<td>1 cup</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coffee, brewed from grounds, prepared with tap water</td>
<td>6 oz.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apples, raw, with skin</td>
<td>1 apple</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plums, raw</td>
<td>1 plum</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How To Read A Nutrition Label

1 Serving Size
First look at the serving size and the number of servings in the package. All the information on this label is based on this serving or portion size. So, if you eat double the serving, you will consume double the calories, carbohydrate, fat and other nutrients.

2 Calories
Calories provide a measure of how much energy you get from a serving of this food. This gives the total calories per serving. The portion of the total calories that comes from fat is also given. A good rule of thumb is to look for foods that show one-third or fewer of the total calories coming from fat.

3 Total Carbohydrate and Sugars
This shows the amount of carbohydrate per serving that comes from sugar. This includes both natural sugar and added sugar.

4 Vitamins and Minerals
Eating enough of these nutrients can improve your health and help reduce the risk of some diseases and conditions.

9 Total Fat
This gives the total grams of fat in one serving of that food.

Unsaturated Fat
You can find the amount of unsaturated fat by subtracting the amount of saturated and trans fats from the total fat. Eating more unsaturated fats than saturated fats can help lower blood cholesterol levels. Most unsaturated fats come from plant sources and include canola, vegetable and olive oil.

Saturated, Trans Fat And Cholesterol
Eating too much fat may increase your risk of certain chronic diseases, such as stroke, and some types of cancers.

5 Limit These Nutrients

6 Sodium
This shows the amount of sodium (salt) in one serving. This is important if you are on a low-sodium diet or if you have high blood pressure.

7 Dietary Fiber
This shows the portion of the total carbohydrate per serving that is fiber. Eating a diet high in dietary fiber promotes healthy bowel function.

8 Protein
This shows the total grams of protein in one serving. Protein is an essential nutrient for growth and health.
Keep Track Of Your Weight
Weigh yourself each morning after urinating
Call your doctor for a weight gain of 2-3 pounds overnight or 5 pounds in 5 days

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sunday</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
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<th>Saturday</th>
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</table>
Glossary

The following is a list of terms with their definitions.

Tests

Echocardiogram (ECHO, cardiac ECHO): This is a sonogram or ultrasound of the heart. It is a non-invasive and painless test that measures heart function. It can determine ejection fraction and assess the size, shape and pumping ability of the heart. It is one of the most widely used cardiac tests and can be done at the doctor’s office.

Electrocardiogram (EKG, ECG): This is a test that records the electrical activity of the heart. Heart rate and rhythm are measured.

Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI): This is a type of test that provides detailed pictures of parts of the heart, even if they are very small. It is a non-invasive and painless test. Your body is put into a tube-like machine. Some people cannot tolerate the feeling of being closed in or claustrophobic. You cannot have an MRI if you have a pacemaker or any metal material in your body. Certain other restrictions apply. The technician will ask multiple questions before conducting the test.

Computed Tomography (CT) Scan: This test provides X-ray images from many different angles around the body. A computer processes the images to give detailed pictures of the body.

Multi Gated Acquisition (MUGA) Scan: This test uses a radioactive marker to evaluate the function of the heart’s chambers. It can check the motion of the heart. Aside from the insertion of an IV for the medicine, it is a non-invasive and painless test.

Cardiac Catheterization (heart cath): During this test, a small catheter or tube is inserted through a large artery to your heart. Once placed correctly, an iodine-based medicine is given to show the heart and vessels. X-rays are taken. Angioplasty (widening of an artery) can also be performed during a cardiac catheterization.

Cardiac Electrical Devices

All of the following devices require regular check-ups. Sometimes this can be done over the phone or through the Internet. Precautions may be necessary when near electromagnetic fields. Talk with your doctor about information available for your specific device.

Pacemaker: A small medical device put into the chest or abdomen. It uses electrical impulses to control abnormal heart-beats. These impulses are delivered through small wires connected to your heart.

Implantable (Internal) Cardioverter Defibrillator (ICD): A small medical device similar to a pacemaker put into the chest or abdomen that uses electrical shocks to correct abnormal heart-beats that occur in the ventricles. These impulses are delivered through small wires connected to your heart.

Cardiac Resynchronization Therapy (CRT) device: This device combines a pacemaker and defibrillator. It is also called a biventricular pacemaker.

Medical Conditions

Cardiomyopathy: A condition that affects the heart muscle. Sections of the heart become thick, and the heart can become enlarged or stretched. This changes the heart’s ability to function or pump well. The most common type of this condition is called dilated cardiomyopathy. It can be shown to run in families. A virus, alcohol or certain drugs, and sometimes pregnancy, are among the causes. If the cause is unknown, your doctor will call it idiopathic cardiomyopathy. Restrictive or hypertrophic cardiomyopathy causes a problem in filling of the heart’s chambers.

Sleep Apnea: A sleep disorder with abnormal pauses in breathing. Untreated sleep apnea is thought to be a risk factor for high blood pressure, stroke, heart failure and diabetes.
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
“Heart Failure Fact Sheet” http://www.cdc.gov/dhdsp/data_statistics/fact_sheets/fs_heart_failure.htm

American Heart Association
“About Heart Failure” http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/Conditions/HeartFailure/AboutHeartFailureAbout-Heart-Failure_UCM_002044_Article.jsp
“Warning Signs of Heart Failure” http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/Conditions/HeartFailure/WarningSignsforHeartFailure/Warning-Signs-of-Heart-Failure_UCM_002045_Article.jsp
“Symptoms & Diagnosis of Heart Failure” http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/Conditions/HeartFailure/SymptomsDiagnosisofHeartFailure/Symptoms-Diagnosis-of-Heart-Failure_UCM_002047_Article.jsp
“Prevention & Treatment of Heart Failure” http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/Conditions/HeartFailure/PreventionTreatmentofHeartFailure/PreventionTreatment-of-Heart-Failure_UCM_002048_Article.jsp
“Advanced Heart Failure” http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/Conditions/HeartFailure/Advanced-Heart-Failure_UCM_441925_Article.jsp

National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute
“What Are the Signs and Symptoms of Heart Failure?” http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/health-topics/topics/hf/signs.html
“How Is Heart Failure Treated?” http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/health-topics/topics/hf/treatment.html
“Living With Heart Failure” http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/health-topics/topics/hf/livingwith.html

USA.gov

Excellusbcbs.com
“Excellus for Members” https://www.excellusbcbs.com/wps/portal/xl/mbr

Healthwise® Knowledgebase
“Heart Failure” https://www.healthwise.net/excellus/Content/StdDocument.aspx?DOCHWID=hw44415