

Managing Heart Failure Symptoms

WATCH THE VIDEO ONLINE!

www.healthjourneysupport.com/cardiology/managing-heart-failure

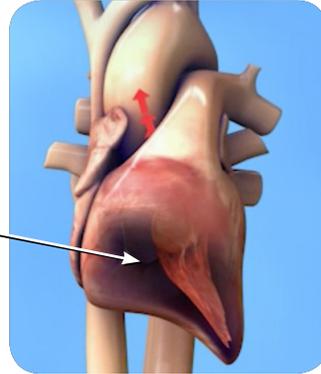
This handout can help you understand how to manage your heart failure symptoms.

What Is Heart Failure?

Heart failure means your heart can't pump enough blood to meet your body's needs.

Most often this is because the pumping sections of your heart, called ventricles, may be weak or damaged.

Weakened ventricles



Symptoms of Heart Failure

You may have one or more of the following symptoms:

- Shortness of breath
- Constant coughing or wheezing.
- Swollen legs, feet or abdomen
- Feeling tired all the time
- Feeling confused
- Feeling sick to your stomach with no appetite.
- Feeling that your heart is racing or throbbing

Steps to Control Your Symptoms

It's important to control your heart failure symptoms. Taking these three actions can help you to manage your condition:

- Follow your doctor's instructions.
- Make heart-healthy lifestyle changes.
- Stay aware of changes in your symptoms.



Follow Your Doctor's Instructions

- Take all medications as directed by your doctor.
- Don't stop taking your medications or skip doses.
- Note any side effects and tell your doctor.
- If you can't afford your medication talk to your doctor.
- Ask your doctor before taking over-the-counter medication or supplements.
- Go to all appointments for doctor's visits and lab tests.
- Get flu and pneumonia shots as directed.

Make Heart-healthy Changes

- Eat foods with less salt (sodium).
- Avoid processed foods and fast foods.
- Read and compare food labels.
- Include low-fat, low cholesterol, and high-fiber foods in your diet.
- Limit or avoid alcohol.
- Monitor how much fluid is in your diet.
- Don't smoke.
- Become physically active. Talk to your doctor about goals and limitations for your daily activity level.



As you exercise, keep this in mind:

- Rest as needed.
- Stop if you have chest pain, or more than usual shortness of breath.
- Don't exercise outside when it's too hot or too cold.

Managing Heart Failure Symptoms



Monitor How You Feel

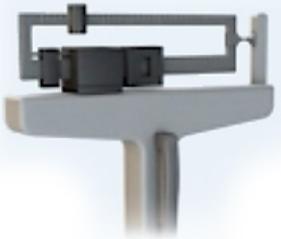
Stay aware of changes in your symptoms. Use the traffic light colors green, yellow, and red, to know when you need help.

Green is your goal. It means your symptoms are under control. You have:

- No shortness of breath.
- No weight gain greater than two pounds.
- No swelling in your feet, ankles, legs or abdomen.
- No chest pain.

Weigh yourself:

- At the same time each day
- In the same type of clothes
- Before eating or drinking
- Keep a record of changes in your weight
- To see if you are retaining fluid.



Know the Heart Failure Warning Zones



Yellow zone symptoms are warning signs. Call your doctor immediately if you:

- Gain three or more pounds in a day, or five or more pounds in a week;
- Have more shortness of breath;
- Have more swelling in your feet, ankles, legs or abdomen
- Have a dry, hacking cough;
- Are very tired;
- Feel dizzy or “not right”
- Can’t breathe well lying down, or have to sleep sitting up.

Red zone symptoms are emergencies. Call 911 if you have the following symptoms:

- You are struggling to breathe, even at rest
- You have chest pain
- You are confused or can’t think clearly

The information in this handout has been created and peer reviewed by graduate-level medical illustrators, followed by reviews from medical subject experts, either physicians or PhDs on the Nucleus Medical Review Board, to ensure medical accuracy and audience level appropriateness.

The handout is intended to supplement the information you receive from your health care provider and should never be considered personal medical advice. Always contact your health care provider with health questions and concerns.