



BC's HEART FAILURE NETWORK
Quality care for quality life.

Living with Heart Failure

Resources to help you manage your heart failure



**Please bring this binder with you when you go to
appointments with your doctor or the Heart Function Clinic**

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Living Well with Heart Failure

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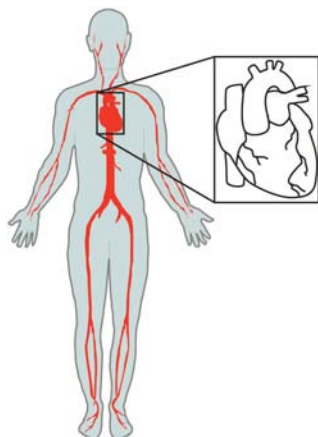


Understanding Heart Failure

The Basics

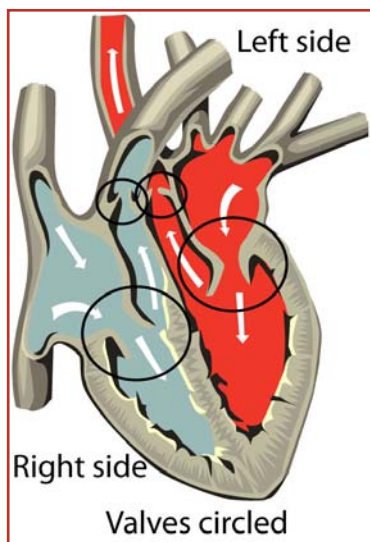
How does the heart work?

Your heart is a muscle about the size of your fist. It works like a pump, pumping blood and nutrients around your body.



The heart is actually a 2-sided pump. The *right side of the heart* pumps 'used' blood from the body to the lungs. In the lungs, your blood is loaded up with oxygen. The *left side of the heart* pumps 'fresh' blood full of oxygen from the lungs to the rest of the body. The left side of the heart is usually the larger than the right. That is because it has to pump hard to get the blood out to all parts of your body.

Each side of the heart has 2 chambers. Valves link the chambers and keep blood pumping in the right direction. These valves open and close with each heartbeat.



What is Heart Failure?

Heart failure is when your heart is not pumping as strongly as it should. Your body does not get the right amount of blood, oxygen, and nutrients it needs to work properly.

Heart failure usually gets worse over time. While heart failure cannot be cured, people do learn to live active, healthy lives by managing their heart failure with medication, changes in their diet, weighing daily and physical activity.

There are two main types of heart failure:

- **A weak pump:** When the heart muscle is weak, it gets larger and 'floppy'.
- **A stiff pump:** When the heart muscle cannot relax between beats because the muscle has become stiff. The heart cannot properly fill with blood between beats.



A large 'floppy' heart

Both types of heart failure reduce the blood flow and oxygen to your body.



What causes Heart Failure?

Heart failure has many causes including:

- Heart attack
- High blood pressure
- Heart valve problems
- Heart defects at birth
- Lung conditions
- Excessive use of alcohol or drugs

Other possible causes of heart failure include:

- Obesity
- Sleep apnea
- Infections affecting the heart muscle
- Abnormal heart rhythm
- Severe anemia
- Severe kidney disease
- Overactive thyroid gland
- Exposure to chemotherapy or radiation

Not sure what caused your heart failure? Ask your doctor or nurse practitioner.

Signs of Heart Failure

You may notice any of the following signs.

♥ You feel short of breath when you do daily activities.

♥ You find it harder to breathe when resting or lying down.

♥ You wake up at night feeling short of breath.

♥ You find it easier to sleep by adding pillows or by sitting up in a chair.

♥ You cough often, especially when lying down.



♥ Your cough is either dry and hacking, or moist and you cough up mucus (which could be slightly pink).

♥ You feel your heart beat faster and it does not slow down when you rest.

♥ You feel your heart racing, jumping, or pounding in your chest.

♥ You cannot walk as far you normally can.

♥ You are tired all the time and have no energy to do daily activities.

♥ You feel lightheaded or dizzy, especially when you stand up or increase your activity and this is new for you.



♥ You cannot eat as much as you normally would.

♥ You are not hungry and do not feel like eating.

♥ You feel bloated or your clothes feel tighter than normal.



♥ You have swelling in your feet, ankles, legs, or even up into the belly (abdomen).

♥ Sudden increase in body weight where you gain more than 4 pounds (2 kilos) in 2 days.



♥ You feel uneasy, like something does not feel right.

♥ You feel confused and have trouble thinking clearly (and this is new for you).



Tests to identify heart failure

There is no single test for heart failure. Instead your doctor does a number of tests. The doctor looks at all the test results to determine if you have heart failure.

Tests can include:

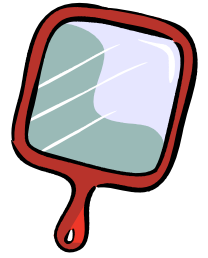
- Blood tests to check certain enzymes
- Chest x-ray to look at the size of your heart
- Electrocardiogram (or ECG) to look at the electrical activity of the heart
- Exercise stress test to look at how your heart responds to exercise
- Nuclear medicine scan to get a close look at the pumping of your heart
- Angiogram to look for blockage in your heart arteries
- Echocardiogram or ultra sound of the heart to look at the movements of your heart and measure your ejection fraction

More about Ejection Fraction

This test is usually done during an echocardiogram or a nuclear medicine scan. Your ejection fraction can go up and down, depending on your heart condition and how well the treatment is working. It is good to know what your ejection fraction reading is. The reading is given as a percentage with normal being between 55 and 70%. Less than 55% means your heart is not pumping as strongly as it should be. Your ejection fraction helps your doctor or nurse treat your heart failure.

How is heart failure treated?

Look in the mirror - the key to treatment is you.



Your doctor relies on you to make changes in your lifestyle and eating habits. While there is a team of health care providers working with you to manage your heart failure, you are the one in charge.

Treatment is focused on helping you live a longer and healthier life. This includes:

- Monitoring your symptoms
- Reducing salt in your diet
- Increasing your daily activity through regular exercise
- Keeping your blood pressure low
- Maintaining a healthy weight
- Stopping unhealthy habits such as smoking
- Taking your medications as prescribed

For some people, surgery and medical devices are needed to treat the problem that led to the heart failure. Treatments could include:

- Coronary bypass surgery
- Valve repair or replacement surgery
- Implanted device such as a pacemaker and/or defibrillator
- Mechanical device to help the heart pump
- Heart transplant

For novel new ideas on heart failure treatment consult your health care provider.



Plan today for the future

Your heart failure may get worse over time. Start thinking now about how you wish to be cared for if your disease progresses. This is called 'advanced care planning'. Advance care planning allows you to have a say in your health care if you are unable to speak for yourself.

Talk to your family and your doctor about helping you live well with heart failure and about the care you do or do not want in the future.

Things to think about and consider:

- ♥ What does it mean to live well with heart failure?
- ♥ What is important to you to make your life the best it can be?
- ♥ What is important to you as your condition progresses?
- ♥ What worries and concerns do you have?
- ♥ How will your progressing heart failure affect you and your family?
- ♥ Who or what gives you support when you need it?
- ♥ If you are not able to make your own health care decisions, who will you want to make them for you? Does that person know what you want?
- ♥ Do you have written instructions for how you want to be cared for if you cannot make decisions for yourself (this is called an advance directive).

Why learn to manage your heart failure?

When you take charge of your health and learn to manage your heart failure, it helps you:

- ♥ Improve the quality of your life.
- ♥ Feel confident that you can manage your heart failure.
- ♥ Control your condition so it will not control you.
- ♥ Know when to ask for help from your care team.
- ♥ Limit the need to go to the hospital for care.
- ♥ Prevent or limit heart failure complications as the disease progresses.

Talk with your family and your care team about your disease and care plan.

People who learn to manage their heart failure are more likely to live a longer, healthier life than those who do not.

For more information on heart failure

- ♥ BC's Heart Failure Network
www.bcheartfailure.ca
- ♥ Interior Health Authority Heart Failure Online Education
www.bcheartfailure.ca/for-patients-and-families/e-learning-module-on-hf/
- ♥ HealthLinkBC on Heart Failure
www.healthlinkbc.ca/kb/content/special/hw44415.html#tp17534
- ♥ Canadian Cardiovascular Society
www.ccs.ca
- ♥ Canadian Heart Failure Network
www.chfn.ca
- ♥ Heart Failure Society of America
www.hfsa.org

Heart Failure Zones

Check Weight Daily

- ♥ Weigh yourself in the morning before breakfast. Write it down. Compare your weight today to your weight yesterday.
- ♥ Keep the total amount of fluids you drink to only 6 to 8 glasses each day. (6-8 glasses equals 1500-2000 mL or 48-64 oz)
- ♥ Take your medicine exactly how your doctor said.
- ♥ Check for swelling in your feet, ankles, legs, and stomach.
- ♥ Eat foods that are low in salt or salt-free.
- ♥ Balance activity and rest periods.



Which Heart Failure Zone Are You Today? Green, Yellow, or Red

Safe Zone

ALL CLEAR – This zone is your goal!

Your symptoms are under control.

You have:

- No shortness of breath.
- No chest discomfort, pressure, or pain.
- No swelling or increase in swelling of your feet, ankles, legs, or stomach.
- No weight gain of more than 4 lbs (2 kg) over 2 days in a row or 5 lbs (2.5 kg) in 1 week.



Caution Zone

CAUTION – This zone is a warning

Call your Health Care provider (eg. Doctor, nurse) if you have any of the following:

- ▲ You gain more than 4 lbs (2 kg) over 2 days in a row or 5 lbs (2.5 kg) in 1 week.
- ▲ You have vomiting and/or diarrhea that lasts more than two days.
- ▲ You feel more short of breath than usual.
- ▲ You have increased swelling in your feet, ankles, legs, or stomach.
- ▲ You have a dry hacking cough.
- ▲ You feel more tired and don't have the energy to do daily activities.
- ▲ You feel lightheaded or dizzy, and this is new for you.
- ▲ You feel uneasy, like something does not feel right.
- ▲ You find it harder for you to breathe when you are lying down.
- ▲ You find it easier to sleep by adding pillows or sitting up in a chair.



Health Care Provider _____ Office Phone Number _____

Danger Zone

EMERGENCY – This zone means act fast

Go to emergency room or call 911 if you have any of the following:

- You are struggling to breathe.
- Your shortness of breath does not go away while sitting still.
- You have a fast heartbeat that does not slow down when you rest.
- You have chest pain that does not go away with rest or with medicine.
- You are having trouble thinking clearly or are feeling confused.
- You have fainted.



The information in this document is intended solely for the person to whom it was given by the healthcare team.

For more information refer to: www.bcheartfailure.ca

Limiting Sodium (Salt) When You Have Heart Failure

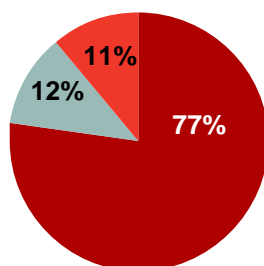
Sodium is a mineral found in food, table salt, and sea salt. Your body needs some sodium, but too much sodium causes your body to hold on to (or retain) fluid. This fluid build-up makes your heart work harder. The fluid build-up can cause swelling in your feet, legs, or belly. Fluid can also build up in your lungs, making it hard for you to breathe.

If your weight increases by more than 2 kg (4 lb) in two days, or 2.5 kg (5 lb) in 1 week, you are retaining fluid. If this happens, you should call your health care provider right away.

You should restrict the amount of sodium you eat to 2000mg or less each day.

In the average Canadian diet, where does sodium come from?

- In ready-made processed foods and restaurant meals (77%)
- Naturally occurring in food (12%)
- Added to food in cooking and at the table (11%)



How to avoid salt (sodium)?

- ♥ Eat fresh foods most of the time and prepare home-cooked, low sodium meals.
- ♥ Frozen foods are acceptable if they do not have added salt or sodium additives (which are used as preservatives).

- ♥ Remove the salt shaker from the table. Don't add salt, flavoured salts or seasonings high in salt to your foods.

One teaspoon of salt contains 2300mg of sodium!



- ♥ Season your food with herbs, spices, lemon juice, dry mustard, and garlic. Try one of the many seasoning blends which contain no salt such as Mrs. Dash.

- ♥ Stay away from eating:
 - processed foods
 - deli meats
 - pickled foods
 - salted snack foods such as potato chips, pretzels, dips, and salted nuts

- ♥ Limit the amount of canned foods you eat. Choose products labelled 'low sodium'. Foods labelled 'lower', 'less' or 'reduced in salt or sodium' may still be high in sodium (including soups and meats).

- ♥ Eat out less often.
 - Ask restaurants to provide information on low sodium choices.
 - Restaurant meals and fast foods are always higher in salt than home cooked low sodium meals.
 - For more info, please refer to *Low Sodium (Salt) Eating Out* fact sheet at: <http://www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthyeating/low-sodium-choices.html>

Can I use Salt Substitutes?

Some salt substitutes use potassium instead of sodium. Check with your doctor or dietitian before using a salt substitute because some people need to limit how much potassium they have each day.

Keep your sodium intake to less than 2000mg each day.

As you gradually reduce the amount of salt you are eating, your taste buds will adjust!

How do I know how much sodium is in food?

Here are some helpful tips when reading the nutrition label:

- ♥ Look at the serving size – the amount of sodium listed is per serving (not the whole package).
- ♥ Keep track of the total amount of sodium you eat.
Remember: Your maximum recommended daily amount of sodium is **no more than 2000mg per day from all sources**.
- ♥ Keep the sodium content of each meal below 650mg – this helps spread out your sodium intake over the day preventing excessive thirst and/or fluid retention.
- ♥ By law, foods labelled 'low sodium' must contain 140mg or less per serving.

Other ingredients high in sodium include: baking soda, brine, monosodium glutamate (MSG), soy sauce, fish sauce, garlic salt, celery salt, or any ingredient with 'sodium' as part of its name.

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size: Per ½ cup (125ml)

Amount	% Daily Value	
Calories 140		
Total Fat 0.5g	1%	
Saturated Fat 0.2g	1%	
+ Trans Fat 0g		
Cholesterol 0mg	0%	
Sodium 390mg	16%	
Total Carbohydrate 28g	9%	
Dietary Fibre 5g	20%	
Sugars 9g		
Protein 7g		
Vitamin A	2%	Vitamin C 0%
Calcium	8%	Iron 15%

Look what happens to the sodium content of foods when they are processed

Unprocessed	Processed
Cucumber 7 slices = 2mg	Dill pickle 1 medium = 569mg
Chicken Breast 3oz = 74mg	Chicken Pie 1 serving frozen = 889mg
Tomato 1 small = 14mg	Tomato Soup 1 cup = 960mg
Pork Tenderloin 3 oz = 58mg	Ham 3oz = 1095mg

Limiting Fluid When You Have Heart Failure

What is a fluid?

Any food or drink that is liquid at room temperature. This includes water, ice, milk, juices, soft drinks, hot drinks, alcohol, soups, gelatin desserts, ice cream, popsicles, and liquid nutrition supplements (such as Ensure or Boost).

Why do you have to limit fluid?

When you have heart failure, fluid can build up causing swelling in your feet, legs or belly making your heart work harder. Fluid can also build up in your lungs, which may cause you to have trouble breathing.

How much fluid can you have in a day?

You should have **no more than 1.5 to 2 litres of fluid in a day**. You may find you are thirsty to begin with. As you gradually reduce your fluid intake, your body will adjust!

Guide to Fluid Measures

2 tablespoons	=	30 ml	=	1 ounce
1 glass	=	250 ml	=	8 ounce
1 pint	=	500ml	=	16 ounce
1 litre or 1 quart	=	1000 ml	=	32 ounce
2 litres	=	2000 ml	=	64 ounce

Total amount of fluid per day
1.5-2 litres = 48-64 ounces = 6-8 glasses

How do you know when you have too much fluid?

To keep track of whether your body is holding on to too much fluid, weigh yourself daily.

Here is how to weigh yourself:

- ♥ Weigh yourself at the same time every day. The best time is first thing in the morning.
- ♥ Weigh yourself after emptying your bladder (gone pee).
- ♥ Wear the same amount of clothing each time.



You are holding on to too much fluid when:

- Your weight increases by more than 2 kg or 4 lb in two days.
- or
- Your weight increases by more than 2.5 kg or 5 lb in a week.

Contact your health care provider right away if you are holding too much fluid.

Tips for reducing your fluid intake

- ♥ Use smaller cups and glasses.
- ♥ Measure the amount of fluid your mugs and glasses hold. They may measure more than 250 ml or 8 ounces!
- ♥ Sip your fluids slowly.
- ♥ Write down the amount you drink each day until limiting your fluid becomes a habit.

(More tips on page 2.)

More tips for reducing your fluid intake

- ♥ Sip your fluids throughout the day. Keeping track of fluids is the only way to learn how to make the 1.5 to 2 litres of fluid last you through the day.
- ♥ You may find it easier to use a reusable water bottle. Measure how much the bottle holds so you know exactly how much water you are drinking.
- ♥ Drain the fluid from canned fruit.
- ♥ Be aware of foods with high water content like watermelon, yogurt, and pudding.
- ♥ If you can, swallow your pills with soft food like yogurt or porridge.



- ♥ Limit the amount of sodium you eat to 2000mg or less each day. Salt will make you thirsty. For more information, refer to the handout *Limiting salt (sodium) when you have heart failure*.



- ♥ Try not to eat sweet foods. They can make you thirsty. If you have diabetes, controlling your blood sugar also helps control your thirst.
- ♥ Try not to drink alcohol. Alcohol dehydrates your body and makes you thirsty.

Tips to deal with thirst

- ♥ Rinse your mouth with water often, but do not swallow.
- ♥ Brush your teeth often.
- ♥ Use a mouth wash. However, do not use a mouth wash that contains alcohol. They tend to dry out your mouth.
- ♥ Snack on a small piece of cold or frozen fruit such as a frozen grape or cold orange slice. Try cold crisp vegetables too.
- ♥ Chew sugar-free gum.
- ♥ Suck on a lemon wedge, lemon candy, or sour candy.
- ♥ Use lip balm to keep your lips from drying out.
- ♥ Don't overheat your home. Consider using a humidifier to increase the moisture in the air.
- ♥ Ask your pharmacist about gels or sprays that can add moisture to your mouth.

For more tips and resources for limiting fluid, call HealthLink BC (dial 8-1-1) to speak to a health care professional. You can also refer to www.healthlinkbc.ca (or [click here](#)).

Daily Weight Information

Patient Name: _____

Heart Function Clinic or Physician's office: _____

Health Care Provider: _____

Contact phone number: _____

Check Your Weight Every Day

Why:

- ♥ Checking your weight every day lets you know if your body is retaining fluid.
- ♥ Excess fluid build up in your body makes your heart work harder.
- ♥ When you report weight gain early to your health care provider, they can help you prevent your heart failure from getting worse. This can help prevent a hospital admission.

If your weight increases by:

- More than 2 kg (4 lb) in two days, or
- More than 2.5 kg (5 lb) in 1 week



You are retaining fluid.

You should call your health care provider.



For further directions, please refer to 'Heart Failure Zones' information sheet.

When:

- ♥ Same time every day
- ♥ Preferably before breakfast

How:

- ♥ After you have emptied your bladder (gone 'pee')
- ♥ Wear the same amount of clothing

Record your weight in the attached calendar.

(or You may prefer to use your own method such as a notebook, a computer.)

Remember to bring your record to your doctor or clinic appointment.

Your 'Dry Weight' (when you don't have excess fluid in your body): _____

Write down your weight each day compare today's weight to yesterdays weight.

If your weight increases by:

- More than 2 kg (4 lb) in two days, or
- More than 2.5 kg (5 lb) in 1 week



You are retaining fluid.

You should call your health care provider.

Month _____						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday



Why People with Heart Failure Should Keep 'Active'

What does it mean to be 'active'?

Activity and exercise - People often use these two terms to mean the same thing. All physical activities and exercise do involve increasing the heart rate and strengthening muscles.

There is, however, a small difference in their meanings. Physical activity is when you are using energy to move your body to get from place to place. Exercise is a type of physical activity. The difference is - exercise is planned. We exercise to improve or maintain fitness or health.

Why activity is important

Keeping active is one of the best ways to keep healthy. Any amount of activity is better than none at all.

Keeping active helps you:

- ✓ Sleep better
- ✓ Feel less tired
- ✓ Feel less breathless
- ✓ Feel more confident and in control



Studies show that daily activity is good for you. It can help you to live better and longer.

Getting started

- ♥ Always check with your health care provider first before starting an activity to make sure you find an activity that matches your personal needs and ability.
- ♥ Start off slowly and pace yourself.

Is the activity level right for me?

Get to know your body. It is important that you feel comfortable doing the activity.

As long as you can talk without being too short of breath the level of activity is okay.



Balance activity and rest

- ♥ Be active at a time when you feel rested, such as first thing in the morning or after nap.
- ♥ Choose which activities to do each day.
- ♥ Spread your activities throughout your day.
- ♥ If you are tired after an activity or the next day, then you have tried to do too much.
- ♥ It may take your body a while to find a balance between activity and rest, so don't give up.



Activities most people with heart failure can do

- ✓ Walking
- ✓ Light housework
- ✓ Gardening
- ✓ Light vacuuming
- ✓ Stretching
- ✓ Laundry
- ✓ Grocery shopping



When to stop an activity

Stop the activity if you:

- Cannot carry on a conversation, sing, or whistle without being short of breath.
- Feel weak, tired, or dizzy.
- Feel sick to your stomach (nauseated).
- Feel your heart is pounding or racing.
- Feel your heart beating irregularly and this is new for you.
- Have pain in your chest, neck, jaw, arm, or shoulder.

Stop and rest. Sit in a comfortable chair. Do not go to bed for a nap.

Activity most people with heart failure should not do

- ✗ Activities that involve working above your head such as painting or washing walls, washing windows, vacuuming curtains.
- ✗ Lifting or pushing heavy objects.
- ✗ Straining or holding your breath to do an activity.
- ✗ Sit ups or push ups.
- ✗ Climbing a lot of stairs.
- ✗ Heavy housework or yard work.
- ✗ Going into sauna or hot tub.

Learn more about how important activity is

Review the 'Actionset' called '[Heart Failure: Activity and Exercise](#)' on the HealthLink BC web site.

www.healthlinkbc.ca/kb/content/actionset/aa87369.html

Check the [BC Heart Failure Network](#) web site.

Tips about activity

- ✓ Stick with it, so it becomes a habit.
- ✓ Include a variety of different activities so you do not get bored doing the same thing all the time.
- ✓ Wear loose, comfortable clothing and supportive shoes.
- ✓ Count the fluids you drink during the activity as part of your daily fluid amount.



What if you don't feel confident doing activities and exercises on your own?

There are many community-based programs designed specifically for people with heart disease.

To find a program in your community:

- Talk to your health care provider
- Call HealthLink BC at 8-1-1
- Go to the HealthLink BC website (www.healthlinkbc.ca).
 - Click on the 'Find' button.
 - Type in 'cardiac rehabilitation' in the 'What?' box.
 - Type in your location in the 'Where?' box.
 - Click the 'Go' button.
 - Choose a program.
- Contact the Physical Activity Line (PAL)
 - 1-877-725-1149
 - www.physicalactivityline.com
 - info@physicalactivityline.com



Learning to Live with Heart Failure

You can do it! You can make changes in your life to help you feel better and stay healthy. This resource gives you tips for daily life and answers common questions.

Conserve your energy

- Rest at least 1 hour every day.
- Aim for balance.
 - Balance activity with rest.
 - Balance hard activities with easy activities.
 - Do activities when you feel your best.
- Plan ahead.
 - Plan your chores and daily activities ahead of time.
 - Space them out throughout the day and week. You do not have to do everything in one day.
 - Whenever you can, sit to work or do daily chores.
 - Keep things you use the most within reach.
 - Prepare bigger meals and freeze portions to save preparing meals another day.
- Use things that help conserve energy.
 - Choose clothes that have zippers instead of buttons. Make sure the zipper is in the front and not the back.
 - Use long-handled tools to make reaching easier.
 - If needed, use a walker, shower chair, and bedside toilet.
 - Choose light weight house hold or kitchen items. For example, choose aluminum pots and pans instead of cast iron.



- Avoid things that drain energy, such as:
 - Doing chores or activities right after you eat
 - Doing intense physical activity
 - Lifting, stretching, or any other strenuous arm movement
- Ask for help.
 - Ask those you live with to share in doing the daily tasks and household chores.
 - Ask family and friends to help out.

Get enough sleep

- Practice good sleep habits.
 - Have a regular bedtime.
 - Relax before bedtime.
 - If you cannot get to sleep within 30 minutes, get up and read or watch TV.
 - Only use your bed for sleeping and intimacy. This means get out of bed to read or watch TV.
- If you get short of breath lying down, prop yourself up with pillows.
- If you get up often to go to the toilet, talk to your health care provider. Your medications might need adjusting.



Take care of your physical health

- Keep in contact with your health care team.
- Getting sick can be deadly when you have heart failure.
 - Get a flu shot every year.
 - Get a pneumonia shot.

Take care of your emotional health

Many people find it hard to do everything needed to manage their heart failure. If you are feeling stressed, depressed, or unusually worried, the BC Heart Failure website has resources to help you (www.bcheartfailure.ca). Don't hide these feelings. Talk to your health care provider.

Can I drive?

Whether or not you drive depends on how you are feeling. Generally, people can drive as long as their heart failure is under control. However, the Motor Vehicle Act defines when a person is or is not medically fit to drive. If your health care provider feels your health affects your ability to drive safely, it must be reported to the Superintendent of Motor Vehicles. You might have restrictions on your driver's licence or have your licence removed. It is all about public safety.

Can I work?

It depends on your overall health, how you are managing your heart failure, and the type of work. For some people, working might be helpful, but for others it might not be good. Every person is different. Talk to your health care provider about what is right for you.



If your health care provider says you can work, you might be able to start as soon as your signs of heart failure are under control, or you might have to gradually build up to doing all aspects of the work.

Benefits of working:

- Helps you get into a daily routine
- Helps you feel better and improves your mood
- Lessens money worries by having an income

What about having sex?

Some people worry about whether it is safe to have sex when they have heart failure. Once your signs of heart failure are under control, you should be able to have an active and safe sex life. Human touch and good sexual relations are part of a healthy life.

When you have sex, it can take a lot of energy, both emotionally and physically. The physical energy is like climbing 20 steps in 10 seconds.

Sex should be fun and feel good:

- Wait at least 1 hour after eating.
- Do not drink alcohol before sex.
- Choose a time when you are rested and relaxed.
- Choose a comfortable place where it is not too hot or cold.
- Stop and rest if you get short of breath or feel uncomfortable.
- Find other ways to express love and affection.
- Don't get upset if you are not able to perform as you expected.
- Talk to your partner about how you feel.



Problems are possible. Your interest in sex might drop. You might get short of breath during sex. Men might have problems getting an erection. Problems can be a side effect of a medication or a sign your heart failure is getting worse. Talk to your health care provider about any problems having sex.

Remember there are other ways to express love and affection.

How do I stay on track during special occasions?

Whether eating out or eating in, food for special occasions is more likely to be high in salt, especially sauces and gravies. Also, people tend to eat and drink more.

- Make healthy choices.
 - Choose food prepared with little or no salt.
 - Where possible, choose fresh vegetables and fruit.
- Plan big meals for midday.
- Pay special attention to your snacking and portion size.
- Watch your fluid intake.

A word about...

Drinking alcohol

Some alcohol can be helpful to a normal heart. However, sometimes even a small amount of alcohol can cause heart failure to get worse.

Alcohol can weaken your heart muscle and increase your blood pressure, creating more work for your heart.

Ask your health care team if any amount of alcohol is okay for you.



Smoking

Everyone knows smoking and using tobacco products damages your heart and lungs. But quitting is not easy. Your chances of quitting are much better if you ask for help.

Ask your health care team for:

- Help to quit smoking
- Ways to deal with second-hand smoke

To learn more about quitting smoking, check the website: www.quitnow.ca.

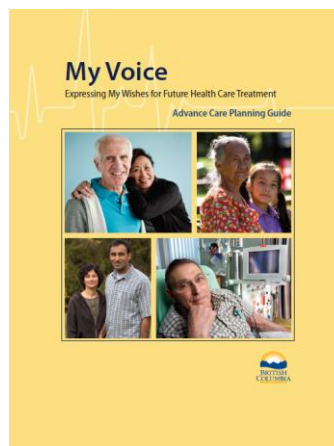


Future heart failure care: have the conversation with your family and healthcare provider

Heart failure is a condition that is not curable and gets worse over time. In the future there could be a time when you may be too sick to consent to treatment offered by your health care provider or doctor. If this happens your healthcare provider will look to your family to help with decisions about your care.

Planning now for the future can give you comfort knowing your family and health care provider knows what's important to you. It can also ease the stress for your family if they have to make medical decisions for you.

To learn more about this, talk to your health care provider, or family doctor and read the booklet: *'My Voice: Expressing My Wishes for Future Health Care Treatment'* from the BC Ministry of Health (available online at www.seniorsbc.ca).



Herbs and Herbal Supplements

Herbs and herbal supplements can be harmful to people taking heart medications.

Always tell your health care provider about any herbs or herbal supplements you are taking.

Bring the herbs and herbal supplements you are taking to every medical visit so they can be checked.

What are herbs and herbal supplements?

Herbs and herbal supplements are plants that are used for medicinal purposes. Some people call them botanicals or herbal remedies.

Why should you be careful taking these products?

We do not always know what the active ingredients are in many herbs and herbal supplements.

Herbs and herbal supplements:

- Can act in the same way as medications. This means they can be dangerous to your health if not taken correctly, if taken in large amounts, or if taken in combination with other medications.
- Can interact with heart medications. This could cause the medication to not work as it should, magnify the medication's side effects, or cause a life-threatening reaction.
- Have not been studied to the same extent as other medications.
- They are classified as dietary supplements not medications. Therefore they are not regulated the same way other medications are regulated. The rules for making dietary supplements are not as strict.

Tips

- ♥ Before you cook with herbs contact your health care provider
- ♥ Always talk to your health care provider or pharmacist before taking herbs or herbal supplements. They can review the herbal medicine and tell you whether it could impact your heart medication.
- ♥ If you are not sure what is considered an herb or herbal supplement, see the list on the next page.
- ♥ **Never** use herbs or herbal supplements if you are taking one of these medications:
 - aspirin
 - digoxin
 - diuretics
 - hypoglycemic medications such as insulin
 - Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications such as ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin), naproxen (Aleve), Celebrex
 - spironolactone
 - warfarin

Health care provider contact information

If you have questions about herbs or herbal supplements, contact your health care provider or pharmacist.

To learn more about herbal supplements, go online to MedlinePlus. Click on the tab 'Drugs & Supplements' then select 'Herbs and Supplements' (or [click here](#)).

Herb or Herbal Supplement	Reasons for taking	Possible problems when you have a heart condition or you are taking heart medication
Aloe Vera (Oral)	For constipation or indigestion To prevent skin irritation	Causes abnormal heart rhythms in pregnancy and in children
Angelica (Dong quai)	Appetite loss, indigestion, infection, pre-menstrual tension syndrome	Can increase the risk of bleeding, especially when taking warfarin
Arnica	To reduce aches, or pain from injury To relieve constipation	Raise blood pressure and can be toxic to the heart
Black Cohosh (Cimicifuga racemosa)	To relieve symptoms of menopause or pre-menstrual tension syndrome	Lowers blood pressure Can increase the risk of bleeding (cause more bleeding) Can be toxic to liver
Beta carotene	Antioxidant helps get rid of substances that harm the body (free radicals)	Increases the risk of death
CoQ10 (Co-enzyme Q10, Ubiquinone, Ubiquinol)	To increase your energy To treat heart failure or other heart conditions	Does not improve heart function Can decrease the effect of warfarin
Danshen (Salvia miltiorrhiza-root)	To treat heart conditions	Can increase the risk of bleeding (cause more bleeding)
Echinacea	To prevent colds	Interferes with an enzyme in the liver that helps clear medications out of the body
Ephedra (Ma Huang)	To treat asthma, obesity	Increases heart rate and blood pressure Could cause death if taken with certain heart medications
Feverfew	To treat/prevent migraines, arthritis	Can interfere with the clotting of your blood
Fish Oil	A common supplement	Can increase the risk of bleeding, especially if used in excess
Flaxseed	To lower cholesterol.	Can increase the risk of bleeding
Ginger	To relieve nausea, lower cholesterol, stop your blood from clotting, aid in digestion	Can interfere with the clotting of your blood Can interfere with how heart or high blood pressure medications work
Garlic	To lower cholesterol To prevent and treat colds and infections	If you are taking aspirin, warfarin or other anticoagulants, it can increase your risk of bleeding
Ginkgo	To improve circulation, memory. To prevent altitude sickness	If you are taking aspirin, warfarin or other anticoagulants, it can increase your risk of bleeding Interferes with the actions of diuretics (Lasix)
Ginseng	To improve memory, physical capacity, immune system and to slow aging	Increases blood pressure and heart rate. Do not take if you have high blood pressure (hypertension) Can increase blood levels of digoxin Can increase the risk of bleeding
Goldenseal	To treat constipation, Can also acts as an anti inflammatory	Increases blood pressure, causes high blood pressure Can interfere with blood thinners (anticoagulants)
Hawthorn	To treat high blood pressure and heart failure	Do not take if you are taking digoxin and blood pressure medications
Kelp	Commonly used supplement	Can increase effects of blood pressure and anticoagulant medication Causes low blood pressure and increases risk of bleeding
Licorice root	To treat coughing, stomach ulcers and liver cirrhosis	Increases blood pressure: Do not take if you have a heart condition or on heart medications
Nettle	To treat bladder infections, kidney infections, and kidney stones	Do not take if you have fluid retention caused by heart failure or poor kidneys
St Johns Wort	To treat depression and injuries	Can increase the risk of bleeding Can decrease the effect of digoxin Should not be taken with certain antidepressants
Yohimbine	To treat impotence	Increases heart rate Increases or decreases blood pressure

Adapted from Cleveland Clinic and Mayo Clinic information on herbs and herbal supplements.

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Quality care for quality life.



www.bcheartfailure.ca

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This information does not replace the advice given to you by your healthcare provider.

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