



Patient & Family Guide

2017

# Living With Heart Failure



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## Contents

What is heart failure? .....	2
Symptoms of heart failure .....	2
Some causes of heart failure .....	3
Managing heart failure .....	5
Are there any treatments for heart failure? .....	5
Treatments for heart failure .....	6
Eating less salt (sodium).....	6
Drinking less fluid .....	8
Weighing yourself daily.....	10
Medicine .....	10
Alternative therapy interactions .....	18
Physical activity and/or exercise .....	19
Managing stress .....	20
Goals of treatment .....	22
Resources: who can help me in the community? .....	23
Record of my weight .....	27
When to call your doctor or go to the nearest Emergency Department.....	28

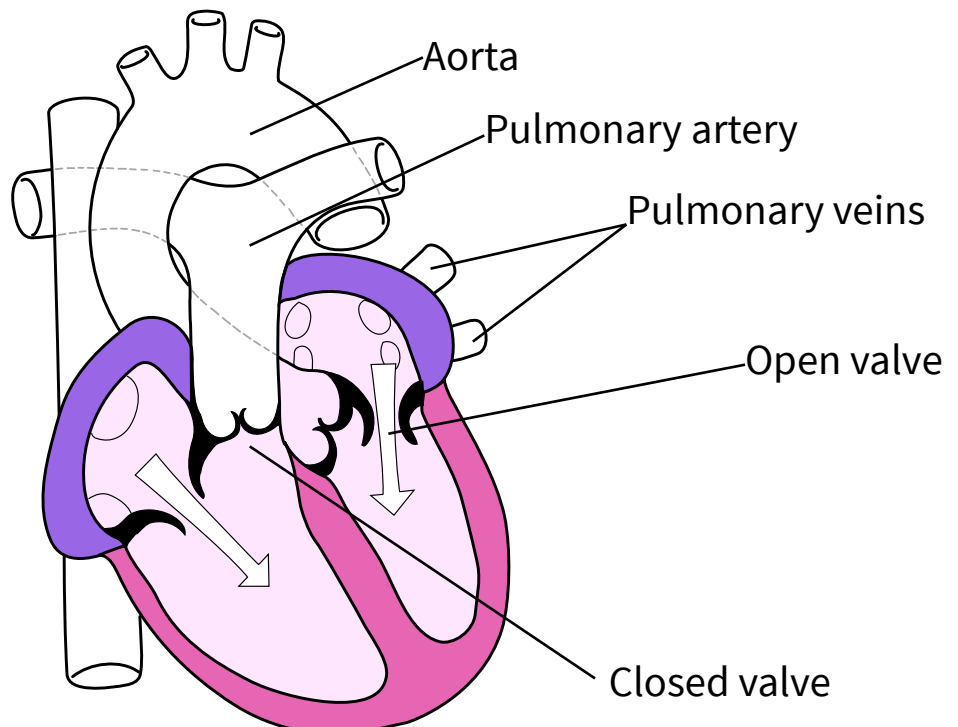
# Living With Heart Failure

## A Patient Guide

### How does a healthy heart work?

- The heart is a strong muscle that pumps blood to all parts of the body.
- It delivers oxygen and nutrients to muscles, organs, and tissues and helps to take away waste products.
- The heart has 4 chambers separated by valves.
- The valves open and close to let blood flow forward and stop blood from moving backward.
- In the heart, blood flows from the chambers on the right side to the lungs, to pick up oxygen.
- This oxygen-rich blood then goes to the left side of the heart and is pumped out to the body.
- The coronary arteries are the blood vessels that carry the blood which supplies the heart muscle with oxygen and nutrients.

Heart with blood returning from tissues and organs



## **What is heart failure?**

- Heart failure does not mean that the heart has failed completely. It means that the heart is not strong enough to meet the body's needs at times of stress or increased activity.
- With heart failure, your heart muscle has either weakened or become stiff. Weakening of your heart makes it harder for it to pump blood to your body. Stiffening causes more pressure inside your heart and may lead to congestion (a back-up of blood in the veins or the lungs).
- Because a weakened heart has to pump extra hard, this extra work can enlarge (make bigger) your heart and damage it even more.
- Common symptoms of heart failure are shortness of breath (trouble breathing), weakness and fatigue (feeling tired), and swollen feet and ankles. (see next section for more about symptoms.)
- Heart failure does not happen quickly; it progresses (gets worse) over time.
- The degree of heart failure can range from mild to severe.
- Heart failure is a chronic (long term) condition. It cannot be cured; however, your treatment plan can help improve how you feel and your prognosis (outcome).

## **Symptoms of heart failure**

### **Why are my ankles and feet swollen?**

- When your heart is weak, less blood is pumped with each heart beat, so less blood flows to your organs and muscles.
- The blood returning to the heart “backs up” in the veins. This backup pressure (congestion) forces fluid from the veins to leak into the tissues.
- The fluid causes swelling (edema) in the legs and ankles. The fluid can also collect in your lungs, stomach, or liver.

### **Why am I short of breath?**

- Fluid may collect in the breathing spaces of the lungs, or your heart may not be able to pump enough blood to supply oxygen to all the tissues when you are doing some activity. This can cause breathing problems when you lie down or when you are active.

## **You may notice some or all of these symptoms of heart failure:**

- Shortness of breath. You may feel this all the time or just when you are active.
- Waking up at night with shortness of breath or a smothering feeling.
- Shortness of breath when lying flat.
- A dry, hacking cough that will not go away, often worse at night.
- Sudden weight gain (2 pounds/in 1-2 days or 5 pounds in a week).
- Swelling in your feet and ankles.
- Swelling/bloating or tenderness in your stomach (belly) area.
- Feeling more tired than usual.
- Loss of appetite (not hungry).
- Cold arms and legs.

## **Some causes of heart failure**

- › High blood pressure
- › Damage to the heart muscle from a heart attack
- › Heart valves that do not open and close well
- › Too much alcohol
- › Drugs that are toxic (poison) to the heart muscle such as chemotherapy drugs, cocaine
- › A virus or bacteria that attacks the heart muscle
- › Severe lung disease
- › A heart defect that has been present since birth or has been passed on by your parents
- › A complication in pregnancy
- › Diabetes
- › Fast or irregular heart rhythms (heart beat)
- › Unknown causes

## **Types of heart failure**

The heart muscle's ability to pump blood through the body can be affected in two ways:

- › The heart muscle becomes stretched and pumps with less force, so less blood moves out to the rest of the body.
- › The heart muscle becomes stiff and can't stretch enough to accept all the blood returning from the body and the lungs. This also results in less blood being moved out to the rest of the body.

The symptoms for both types of heart failure may be similar.

## **How is heart failure diagnosed?**

Your healthcare team will review your health history, symptoms, and medications, and examine you.

## **A number of tests may be needed to check your heart function including:**

- Chest X-ray – This checks the size of your heart and if there is any fluid in your lungs.
- Echocardiogram – This checks the chambers of your heart and heart valves, and measures how well your heart is pumping. The pumping measurement is called an ejection fraction (EF).
- Electrocardiogram (EKG or ECG) – This checks the heart rhythm and looks for signs of poor blood flow to the heart muscle.
- Blood tests – A variety of blood tests may be done to give information to your healthcare team.
- Cardiac catheterization – This may be done to find out if your heart muscle is getting enough blood.

## **Managing heart failure**

### **Are there any treatments for heart failure?**

- Heart failure is a chronic (ongoing), progressive, lifelong condition that cannot be cured.
- Treatment can control your symptoms and prevent them from getting worse.

### **Your treatment plan may include:**

- › Medicine
- › Checking your weight daily
- › Eating less salt
- › Drinking less fluid
- › Rest and relaxation
- › Exercise
- › Losing weight
- › Limiting alcohol intake
- › Stopping smoking and avoiding second-hand smoke
- › Surgery may be recommended for some patients e.g. valve replacement, coronary artery bypass graft, ICD (Implanted Automatic Cardio Defibrillator)

### **Other ways to improve your heart function and health**

- Get a flu shot every year.
- Drink no more than 2-3 cups of caffeinated fluid per day.
- Wear clothing that allows good blood flow in your legs. Do not wear tight stockings. Garters and knee-highs hinder (lessen) the flow of blood in your legs and are not recommended.
- Do not pull or push heavy objects.
- Reduce (lower) and manage stress whenever possible.

## Treatments for heart failure

### Eating less salt (sodium)

- Normally the body balances your salt and fluid levels.
- However, when you have heart failure, your body has trouble getting rid of salt, which causes fluid to build up. The heart must work harder to pump the extra fluid.
- Cutting down on salt can help you feel better and improve your health.
- Many foods have salt or sodium in them naturally even if you do not add salt yourself e.g. milk.
- You should follow a “no added salt” diet. This diet means you should not use a salt shaker to add salt at the table or when you cook.
- You may have a total of 1500-2000 mg (1.5-2 grams) of sodium in your diet each day. This means that at the end of the day when you add all the sodium content from everything you ate or drank, the total should not be more than 1500-2000 mg. This is less than 1 tsp. of salt per day (1 teaspoon of salt = 2300 mg of sodium).

**For more detailed information about what to eat and drink, ask for a copy of these booklets:**

*Sodium Restricted Diet: 1500-2000 mg/day*

› [www.cdha.nshealth.ca/patientinformation/nshealthnet/1161.pdf](http://www.cdha.nshealth.ca/patientinformation/nshealthnet/1161.pdf)

*High Sodium Foods to Avoid*

› [www.cdha.nshealth.ca/patientinformation/nshealthnet/0550.pdf](http://www.cdha.nshealth.ca/patientinformation/nshealthnet/0550.pdf)



## General guidelines to help you choose foods lower in sodium

- “Low sodium” on a label means 140 mg or less per serving.
- Be sure to check the serving size; if you eat more than one serving, you are eating more sodium than you need.
- Prepare and cook all food without adding salt.
- Do not use a salt shaker at the table.
- Poor food choices include prepared, processed, or convenience foods (e.g. “fast food”), as they have a lot of salt.
- Avoid canned food except fruit or products that are labeled “No added salt”.
- Try flavouring your food with a mixture of allowed spices such as pepper, garlic (fresh, flakes, powder, not garlic salt), curry, pepper, dill, and lemon.
- Be careful with salt substitutes; they may have types of salt other than sodium that may be harmful. Check with your doctor or a member of your healthcare team.
- Do not eat foods or take medicines that contain salt or sodium compounds. The words “sodium”, “soda”, or “Na” (the symbol for sodium) on the label will help you to recognize the products that contain a salt compound.
- Do not use medicines which contain sodium (Alka-Seltzer, Bromo<sup>®</sup>-Seltzer, Roloids<sup>®</sup>, and some laxatives). If you are not sure, ask your pharmacist or doctor.
- Many restaurant food items such as pizza and milkshakes (made from mixes), are high in salt and should be avoided.
- When you eat out, choose plain food. For example, choose plain baked, broiled, or steamed meat and vegetables rather than those with sauces, marinades, or gravy. Do not order soups, chowders, or casseroles. Tell the server that you are on a salt-free diet and ask the chef to prepare a salt-free meal for you.
- Go easy on salad dressing and other condiments such as pickles, relishes, or bottled sauces, as they are often high in salt. They usually have a lot of salt.
- Stay away from fast foods, especially Chinese and Mexican food, and fried chicken restaurants.

- Larger grocery stores usually have nutrition consultants. You can call to set up an appointment and they can help you find low-sodium foods in their stores.
- Many fast food and family restaurants have nutrition information sheets which you can ask for to help you make healthier low-sodium food choices.
- Do not eat snacks with added salt on them (such as potato chips, pretzels, salted crackers, nuts).
- Keep in mind that sports drinks such as Gatorade contain sodium.
- Avoid caffeinated drinks such as Red Bull®.

### **Drinking less fluid**

- Even if you are thirsty, this does not mean that your body needs more fluid.
- Most people with heart failure hold extra fluid in their body. This means there is extra fluid for your heart to pump around.
- Drinking less fluid and eating less salt will reduce (lower) the amount of fluid in the body.
- Remember, where salt goes, water follows. If you eat more salt, you will need more water, which will increase fluid in your body. This will not help in managing your heart failure.

### **Keeping track of fluids**

1 millilitre = 1 cubic centimetre

1 ounce = 30 millilitres = 2 tablespoons

1 cup = 8 ounces = 240 millilitres

4 cups = 32 ounces = 1 quart = 1000 millilitres = 1 litre

- You should not drink more than 1 1/2 - 2 litres (6-8 measured cups) of fluid a day. This includes all liquids.
- Keep in mind that many foods have large amounts of fluid and anything that melts at room temperature counts as a liquid.

## Examples of fluids

- Pudding, sherbet, Blizzards®, Jell-O®, yogurt, frozen yogurt, ice cream, frozen ice cream bars, popsicles.
- Soup.
- Juices, as well as counting the juice that is in fruit (For example, 1/2 grapefruit or 1 orange or 1 medium/large apple = 1/2 cup of fluid).
- Melons, such as watermelon, have a lot of fluid.
- Water, tea, milk, coffee, milkshakes, pop.
- Ice cubes.
- Alcohol is not recommended but if you drink beer, wine, or alcohol you must count it as fluid.

## Tips for keeping track of fluids

- Keep a 2 - litre container handy. Every time you take a drink, pour an equal amount of water into the container.
- When the container is 3/4 full, you have had about 1.5 - 2 litres (6-8 cups). This is the maximum amount of fluid you are allowed to drink in that 24-hour period.
- Space your fluids out over the day.
- Take your pills with as little fluid as possible. This fluid must be counted.
- Try sucking on hard, sour candy when you are thirsty (sugarless for people with diabetes).
- Keep some grapes in the freezer. They are good to chew on when you are thirsty. However, if you have diabetes, remember that grapes are high in sugar.
- Gargle with cold mouthwash or cold water.

## **Weighing yourself daily**

- A sudden weight gain means that your kidneys are holding onto water and salt. You do not gain “fat” overnight. Weigh yourself every day to see if your body is holding onto too much water.
- Use the same scale every day.
- Keep the scale on a flat surface (not carpet).
- Track your weight by using a diary. See ‘Record of my weight’ at the end of this booklet.
- Wear clothing that weighs about the same each time you weigh yourself.
- Weigh yourself when you first get up in the morning, after going to the bathroom, before you get dressed, or have breakfast.
- Let your healthcare team know if you gain 2 lbs in one day or 5 lbs in a week.

## **Medicine**

- There are medicines for heart failure that have different effects. In general, they help stop some of your symptoms and prevent your heart function from getting worse.
- Keep your medicines in the original containers or bottles.
- Take your medicines exactly as you are told by your doctor. Missing a dose or taking too much medicine can cause serious problems. Some people with heart failure are admitted to hospital because they did not take their medicines as they were told.
- Natural and herbal remedies can interact with heart medicines (have an effect on). Be sure to check with your healthcare provider or pharmacist before using any over-the-counter products.
- Keep an updated list of your medicines in your wallet. This can be helpful if you have an unexpected healthcare need.

## ACE (Angiotensin-Converting Enzyme) inhibitors and ARB's (Angiotensin Receptor Blockers)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

- These pills relax your blood vessels so your heart does not need to work as hard, which lowers your blood pressure.

### Side effects

#### Call your doctor or the Clinic if you have:

- › Weakness
- › Dizziness
- › Dry hacking cough
- › Dry, itchy skin

#### If you have any signs of an allergic reaction (this is rare), call your doctor right away:

- › Rash
- › Swelling of the face, mouth, tongue, or throat
- › Shortness of breath or wheezing

### Tips

- Get up slowly from a sitting position so that you do not get dizzy. Low blood pressure and dizziness usually happen when your medicine dose is increased. This should only last a few days.
- Separate your ACE inhibitor from your beta blocker by at least 2 hours.
- Do not drink alcohol.
- You will need to have routine blood work done to monitor your potassium and creatinine levels (a measure of one of your electrolytes and kidney function). Your healthcare team will tell you how often this should be done.

## Beta blockers

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

These pills:

- › Slow your heart rate.
- › Help your heart pump more blood with less work.
- › Control high blood pressure.

### Side effects

**Call your doctor or the Clinic if you have:**

- › Headache
- › Weakness
- › Slow heart rate
- › Fatigue
- › Sleep changes (drowsiness or can't sleep)

### Tips

- Take this medicine at the same time every day (should be about 12 hours apart). If you are taking these pills twice a day, take them in the morning and at bedtime.
- Separate your beta blocker from your ACE inhibitor by at least 2 hours.
- If you have diabetes, check your blood sugar often (these pills can hide the symptoms of low blood sugar).
- Take carvedilol with food.

## Diuretics

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

- These medicines are often called “water” or “fluid” pills. They help the kidneys get rid of salt and water.
- Diuretics should be taken in the early morning. This will help you to avoid going to the bathroom during the night.
- If you are prescribed a fluid pill twice a day, take the second dose 5-6 hours after the first dose.
- Please remember that the dosage of your diuretic may change over time and/or you may sometimes need to take more than one type of diuretic.

### Side effects

**Call your doctor or the Clinic if you have:**

- › Leg cramps
- › Unusual fatigue
- › Weakness

### Tips

- You will need to have routine blood work done to monitor your potassium and creatinine levels (a measure of one of your electrolytes and kidney function). Your healthcare team will tell you how often this should be done.

## Potassium-sparing diuretics

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

- This medicine is used for sodium retention (buildup of salt in the body) and swelling when you are only partially responsive (your body isn't reacting as well) to other fluid medicines. It may also be used to treat low potassium levels when other medicines are not working.

### Side effects

- Breast tenderness
- High potassium levels

### Tips

- You will need to have routine blood work done to monitor your potassium and creatinine levels (a measure of one of your electrolytes and kidney function. Your healthcare team will tell you how often this should be done.

## Digoxin

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

- This medicine increases the pumping action of your heart and regulates your heart rate.

### Side effects

**Call your doctor or the Clinic RIGHT AWAY if you have:**

- › A bad taste in your mouth
- › Nausea (feel sick to your stomach)
- › Vomiting (throwing up)
- › Diarrhea
- › An irregular heart rate
- › Blurry vision
- › Halos around lights or objects



## Tips

- Do not take with antacids such as Maalox® or Tums®.
- Do not take this medicine for at least 6 hours before you have blood drawn to check your digoxin level.

## Potassium

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

- The heart muscle needs this mineral to work properly. Some diuretics can cause potassium loss.
- You should eat foods high in potassium (such as bananas and citrus fruit) each day. You may need to take potassium medicine.

## Side effects

**Call your doctor or the Clinic if you have any of these symptoms of potassium loss:**

- › Weakness
- › Muscle cramps
- › Nausea (feel sick to your stomach) or vomiting (throwing up)
- › Heartburn

## Tips

- Do not change the amount of potassium you are taking without talking to your healthcare team.
- Take this medicine with food or milk.
- Do not lie down right after taking this medicine.

# Anticoagulants (blood thinners)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

- These medicines prevent blood clots from forming.

## Side effects

### Report these signs of bleeding to your doctor right away:

- › Large bruises
- › Bruises that do not fade
- › Bleeding from a small cut that does not stop after 10 minutes
- › Bleeding from your gums that does not stop for a long time after brushing your teeth
- › Brown or rusty colored urine (pee)
- › Black or red bowel movements
- › Frequent nose bleeds
- › Severe headache that does not go away
- › Unusual severe stomach pains
- › Coughing up bloody phlegm (mucus)

### If you cut yourself:

- › Apply pressure to the cut immediately.
- › Call your doctor if the bleeding does not stop in 10 minutes.



**Wear a MedicAlert™ bracelet.**

## Tips

- Do not take a double dose to make up for a missed dose. Report missed doses to your doctor or the Clinic on your next visit.
- Be very careful when you are doing activities where you may cut yourself such as shaving with straight razors, sewing, gardening, cooking, woodworking, and handyman jobs.
- Keep all your appointments for blood tests.
- Do not drink alcohol, which thins your blood.
- Ask your pharmacist about any over-the-counter medicines and natural health products you are considering.

## Apresoline® (hydralazine with nitrates )

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

- A combination of these medicines may be used if you cannot take ACE inhibitors. They help your heart pump blood more easily by relaxing the blood vessels.

### Side effects

#### Call your doctor or the Clinic if you have:

- › Dizziness
- › Headache
- › Flushing
- › Nausea (feel sick to stomach) or vomiting (throwing up)

### Tips

- If you are taking pills 3 times a day, take these with meals.
- Take these medicines with liquids at mealtime.
- Report any rash, fever, or joint pain to your doctor.
- Headaches tend to be worse when you first start taking nitrates. Tylenol® (acetaminophen) can help. Follow the directions on the bottle.
- When taking nitrates, it is important to have a “nitrate-free” period. If you are using a nitro patch, remember to put it on in the morning and take it off at night.
- Do not take with medicines such as Viagra™, Levitra®, or Cialis®. **WHEN COMBINED WITH A NITRATE, THEY CAN CAUSE A SEVERE DROP IN BLOOD PRESSURE WHICH CAN BE HARMFUL.**

## **Other medicines**

- You and your healthcare team will talk about all medicine choices.

## **Alternative therapy interactions**

You may have questions about alternative or herbal therapies.

The ingredients in some alternative therapies interfere with (have a negative effect on) the action of heart failure medicines and may have other harmful effects.

### **The following herbal therapies may interfere with the medicines used to treat heart failure:**

- Ephedra (Ma Huang)
- Ephedrine metabolites
  - › Chinese herbs
  - › Hawthorn (crataegus) products
  - › Over-the-counter cold medicines

### **The substances listed below can interact with blood-thinning medicines:**

- › Garlic
- › Ginseng
- › Gingko
- › Coenzyme Q-10
- › St. John's Wort

### **Be sure to tell your healthcare team about any natural medicines or alternative or herbal therapies that you are taking.**

- Remember this includes herbal drinks such as green tea.
- Beware of extravagant (extreme) claims about the benefits of alternative or herbal therapies.
- Never take any of these therapies in place of your regular medicines.

## Physical activity and/or exercise

### Regular exercise can:

- › Decrease the symptoms of heart failure.
- › Improve your general health.
- › Delay the progress of heart failure.

Exercise does not need to be stressful to be helpful. Walking is often the simplest way to exercise.

Energy conservation (saving your energy) is important and includes finding a balance between rest and activity.

### Tips

- Save energy by spreading your activities out throughout the day.
- Stop before you get overtired.
- Learn your limits. If you want to do more activity, do so in small steps.
- Exercise when you have the most energy.
- Rest often. It is just as helpful to walk 5 minutes 3 times a day, rather than 15 minutes at once.
- Increase your activity bit by bit. For example, walk for 5 minutes at a time for 1-2 weeks; then walk for 10 minutes at a time on the 3rd and 4th weeks; then walk for 15 minutes at a time on the 5th and 6th weeks. Continue to increase your activity gradually.
- Wait **AT LEAST** one hour after a meal before exercising.
- Avoid exercising in extreme temperatures, for example, very hot/humid weather or very cold/windy weather.
- **Do not:**
  - › Lift heavy objects.
  - › Push heavy objects.
  - › Shovel snow.
  - › Do an activity where you have to hold your breath.

## **Always exercise within your comfort levels**

- You should feel recovered 1 hour after exercising. If you are exhausted the next day, then you have done too much.
- If you cannot walk and talk, you are walking too fast.
- Stop exercising if you feel:
  - › More short of breath than usual
  - › Weak or tired
  - › Dizzy
  - › Pain or discomfort
  - › Tightness in your chest
  - › Your heart pounding (palpitations)
  - › Your heart racing

## **Managing stress**

- Stress is a feeling you get when you think the demands of life are more than you can handle. “Stressors” are the things in your life that make you feel stressed.
- Stress happens in situations that are frustrating or negative, but can also be brought on by welcome or positive changes.
- Examples of stressors:
  - › Money problems
  - › Health problems
  - › Waiting in line or sitting in traffic
  - › Losing your keys
  - › Getting married or divorced
  - › Having a baby
  - › Changing your daily routine
  - › Taking on new responsibilities at work

## **Things that can make stress worse:**

- › Cigarettes
- › Alcohol
- › Caffeine
- › Sugar

## **Symptoms of too much stress**

- Everyone has different feelings of stress. Some of these symptoms may include tense muscles, headaches, trouble sleeping, being easily frustrated, and poor concentration.
- Being upset about having a heart problem is normal.
- People can feel down or “blue”, feel helpless, or be very worried about their future.
- These feelings generally go away on their own. However, you should see your doctor if you continue to feel depressed, or sleep too little or too much for several months.

To get help dealing with your emotions, ask your family doctor, family or friends for suggestions or check the resources at the back of this guide.

## **Coping strategies that can help you take charge of stress**

- Make rest periods a high priority. Schedule them before and after any activities.
- Is there a time during the day when you are at your best? Set aside that time for your most demanding activities.
- Divide difficult tasks into smaller ones. Take breaks often.
- Do not feel guilty for not getting much done.
- Hire a high school student to do heavy housework and yardwork.
- Check grocery stores in your area for delivery services.
- Apply for a handicapped parking permit.
- Take advantage of community resources and services.

## Goals of treatment

- Heart failure is a disease which does not go away so it is very important for you and your family to be involved in deciding on your treatment goals and plan of care.
- Heart failure is a progressive disease. This means that over time your heart will continue to weaken. This time frame varies and you may feel relatively well for several years.
- At first, you may only have increased symptoms once in awhile, but over time they will happen more often. With each of these episodes, your heart continues to weaken. Your healthcare team will help you to monitor your health status.
- You may want to make some plans for your future health care. **What would you like in the short term as well as long term?**
- Your healthcare team would like to talk about your goals and plan of care. Please remember there are a number of treatment options available for your condition. Not all of them may be right for you.
- For each of your treatments, you should know what the short-term benefits, risks, side effects, and long-term effects are.
- You may decide you do not like a treatment option and refuse it. When you decide to try another treatment option, please be aware there are always long-term effects that you may have to make a decision about at a later date.
- Your goals of treatment can be written down and given to the various members of your healthcare team. These written instructions are called personal directives.
- A personal directive is a legal document in which a capable person sets out what, how, and/or by whom personal care decisions are to be made in the event that he or she is no longer capable of making these decisions on their own.
- A personal directive must be in writing, must be signed by the person making the directive, and must be witnessed by someone.
- There are 3 different types of directives. For more information on personal directives, you can request a patient pamphlet called *Let's Talk About Personal Directives*. You may also get further information about personal directives by going to: [www.cdha.nshealth.ca/patientinformation/nshealthnet/1385.pdf](http://www.cdha.nshealth.ca/patientinformation/nshealthnet/1385.pdf)
- We are also concerned about your family members and caregivers. They may have stress which may affect their health. They are also encouraged to seek help from the members of the healthcare team as well as community agencies.



## Resources: who can help me in the community?

This list was up-to-date when the booklet was written but certain programs may have been added while others may have been cancelled. You may need a referral from your doctor to attend some of these programs.

### Social worker

A social worker can help you and your family with concerns related to your illness or hospital stay. They can give you information about available services to help you during your recovery. You may ask your nurse to contact the social worker or call yourself.

### Nova Scotia Pharmacare Programs

These are medication programs available for all Nova Scotians, depending on your family situation and based on family income. There are Family and Seniors' Pharmacare programs, as well as medication assistance to people in receipt of income assistance, through the Department of Community Services.

Tel: 902-429-6565

Toll free: 1-800-544-6191

Website: <http://novascotia.ca/DHW/msi>

### Heart and Stroke Foundation

Contact your provincial Heart and Stroke Foundation for information about cardiac rehabilitation, education, or support programs near you.

<b>Nova Scotia</b>	<b>Prince Edward Island</b>	<b>New Brunswick</b>	<b>Newfoundland &amp; Labrador</b>
Tel: 902-423-7530 Toll free: 1-800-423-4432	Tel: 902-892-7441	Tel: 506-634-1620 Toll free: 1-800-663-3600	Tel: 709-753-8521

# Cardiac rehabilitation programs

## What is cardiac rehabilitation (rehab)?

The cardiac rehabilitation program combines exercise, education, support, and risk factor reduction to improve your heart health.

The healthcare team includes: nurses, dietitians, physiotherapists, and a consultation with a cardiologist, as needed. Referral to other health professionals is on an as-needed basis.

## What are the benefits of cardiac rehab?

Cardiac rehab may help to:

- › Improve your energy.
- › Increase your fitness level.
- › Strengthen your heart.
- › Decrease your symptoms of angina or shortness of breath.
- › Control your diabetes.
- › Control or decrease your blood pressure.
- › Control or lower your cholesterol level.
- › Control or decrease your weight.
- › Improve your flexibility and muscle strength.
- › Strengthen your bones.
- › Help you return to work.
- › Help you stop smoking.
- › Decrease anxiety and depression.

The exercise classes are one hour, once or twice a week. During the exercise classes, you will use treadmills, arm cycles, and leg cycles. Every class has a group warm-up and cool-down. A home-based exercise program is also available for eligible participants. A specific exercise program will be made for you based on your exercise stress test, medical history, and goals.

## What will I learn about in the education sessions?

- › Heart disease and how your heart works
- › Risk factors for heart disease
- › Behaviour (lifestyle) change
- › Medications
- › Nutrition
- › Exercise
- › Managing stress
- › Managing your heart disease
- › Strategies for weight management

We strongly recommend that you attend a cardiac rehabilitation program if possible. Below is a list of programs available in your area.

### Cardiac Rehabilitation Programs in Nova Scotia

Cardiovascular & Pulmonary Health in Motion  <b>Halifax</b>  Tel: 902-473-3846	One Door Chronic Disease Management Centre  <b>Pictou county</b>  Tel: 902-752-7600 x4700	Cardiac & Pulmonary Rehab  <b>Cape Breton Health Authority</b>  Tel: 902-563-8566	Cardiac Rehabilitation  <b>South Shore Health Authority</b>  Tel: 902-543-4604 x2222
Community Cardiovascular Hearts in Motion  <b>Dartmouth, Sackville, Spryfield</b>  Tel: 902-473-3744	Community Cardiovascular Hearts in Motion  <b>Antigonish, Guysborough, Richmond counties</b>  Tel: 902-867-4500 x4720	Extended Warranty II Valley Cardiac Rehabilitation  <b>Kentville</b>  Tel: 902-679-2657 x1360	

## **Quit smoking programs**

Smokers' Helpline—Nova Scotia

- › Toll free: 1-877-513-5333

## **Emotional concerns**

**For more information on self-help groups contact:**

Self-Help Connection

- › Tel: 902-466-2011
- › Toll free: 1-866-765-6639
- › Website: <http://selfhelpconnection.ca>

**For more information on mental health resources contact:**

Canadian Mental Health Association—Nova Scotia Division

- › Toll free: 1-877-466-6606
- › Website: [www.cmha.ca](http://www.cmha.ca)

**For more information on psychologists in private practice contact:**

Association of Psychologists of Nova Scotia

- › Tel: 902-422-9183
- › Website: [www.apns.ca](http://www.apns.ca)

**For more information on social workers in private practice contact:**

Nova Scotia Association of Social Workers

- › Tel: 902-429-7799
- › Website: [www.nsasw.org](http://www.nsasw.org)

This resource list does not have all programs available in your area. Please contact the Heart and Stroke Foundation for a more complete listing.

If you have access to the Internet, visit the Heart and Stroke Foundation website at [www.heartandstroke.ca](http://www.heartandstroke.ca) for more information.

## Record of my weight

Date	Weight	Date	Weight

## When to call your doctor or go to the nearest Emergency Department

### **Call your doctor right away if you:**

- › Notice your breathing is more difficult.
- › Become short of breath lying down or wake up short of breath at night.
- › Gain 2 pounds overnight or 3-5 pounds in 1 week.
- › Have swelling in your hands, feet and/or abdomen (stomach).
- › Have blurred vision.
- › Feel bloated or your stomach is upset.
- › Have side effects from your medicines.

### **Go to an Emergency Department or call 911 if you:**

- › Have tightness or pain in your chest.
- › Are very short of breath.
- › Are coughing up pink, frothy mucus.

# Notes:

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### Looking for more health information?

Find this pamphlet and all our patient resources here: <http://library.nshealth.ca/PatientGuides>  
Contact your local public library for books, videos, magazines, and other resources.  
For more information go to <http://library.novascotia.ca>

*Nova Scotia Health Authority promotes a smoke-free, vape-free, and scent-free environment.  
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**Nova Scotia Health Authority**  
[www.nshealth.ca](http://www.nshealth.ca)

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The information is not intended to be and does not constitute healthcare or medical advice.  
If you have any questions, please ask your healthcare provider.

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The information in this pamphlet is to be updated every 3 years or as needed.

