

# Success

*with Heart Failure*

## 3 KEY STEPS

CONGESTIVE HEART FAILURE OUTREACH PROGRAM OF EDUCATION (COPE)

# Contents

<b>How Your Heart Works</b> . . . . .	<b>1</b>
Your heart is a pump . . . . .	1
What is heart failure? . . . . .	1
What are the symptoms of heart failure? . . . . .	2
Why noticing your symptoms is important . . . . .	2
Common factors that can make heart failure worse . . . . .	3
<b>3 Key Steps to Success with Heart Failure</b> . . . . .	<b>3</b>
Avoiding salt . . . . .	4
Weighing yourself daily . . . . .	7
Taking your medication . . . . .	8
<b>When to See Your Doctor</b> . . . . .	<b>11</b>
<b>Role of Family and Friends</b> . . . . .	<b>11</b>
<b>3 Key Steps to Success—Summary</b> . . . . .	<b>12</b>
<b>Weight Chart</b> . . . . .	<b>13</b>
<b>Medication List</b>	

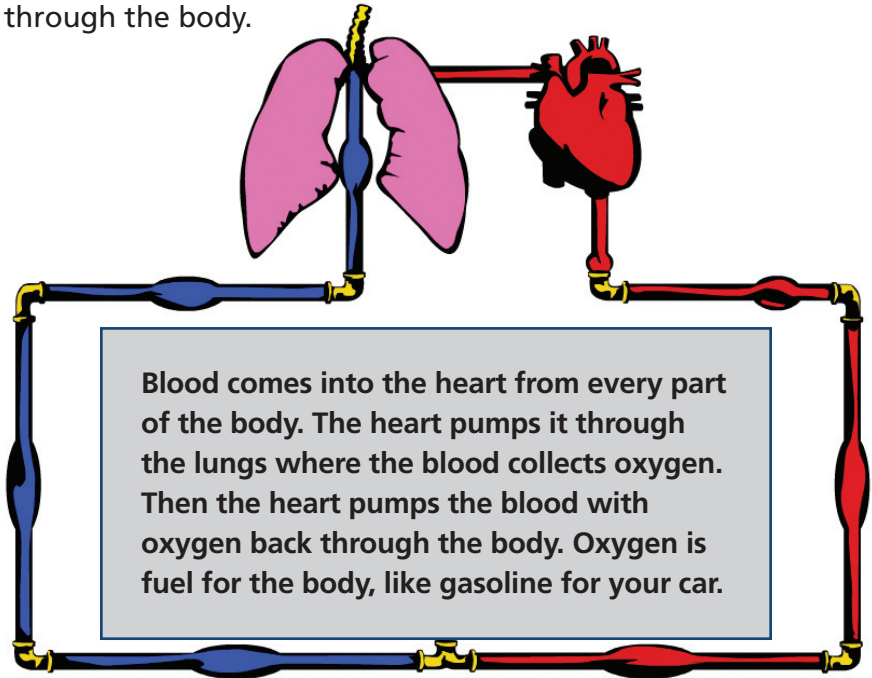
This booklet is accompanied by a VHS or DVD video.



# How Your Heart Works

## Your heart is a pump

The heart is a hollow muscle, about the size of an adult's fist. The main job of the heart is to pump blood and oxygen through the body.



## What is heart failure?

Heart failure—also known as congestive heart failure or *CHF*—means your heart does not pump as strongly as it should. This is because the heart muscle is weak. It does not mean that your heart has “failed.”

A weakened heart means a decrease in the flow of blood. As a result, the body does not get enough blood that carries oxygen. This can make you feel tired or weak.

When the heart does not pump strongly enough, blood moves slowly through every part of the body. Because the flow of blood is reduced, fluids can build up in the body. This causes swelling. Fluid build-up in the lungs can make breathing difficult.

## What are the symptoms of heart failure?

You may have one or more of these five main symptoms:

- weakness
- tiredness
- sudden weight gain due to fluid build-up
- shortness of breath, especially when physically active or when lying down flat
- swelling in the legs, ankles, and feet

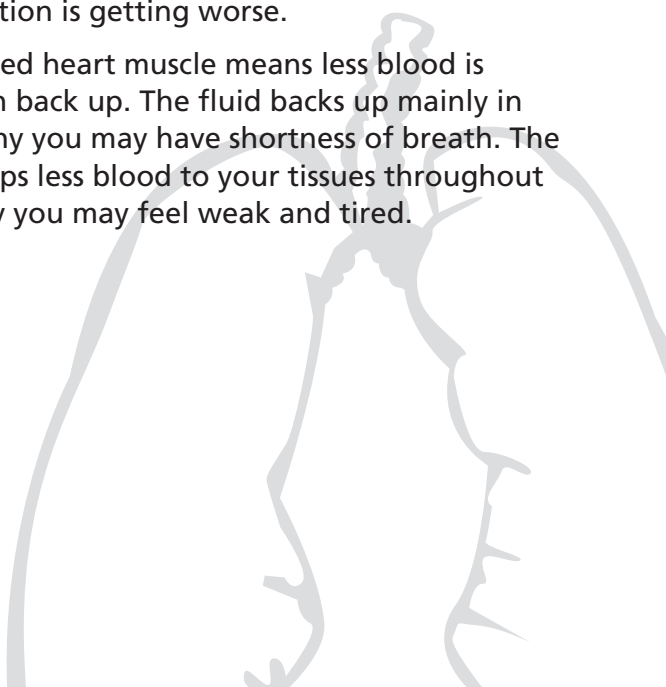
Other symptoms may include:

- coughing
- feeling your heart beat faster than usual or “skipping” beats (palpitation)
- bloating of the stomach

## Why noticing your symptoms is important

Symptoms tell you how well your heart is working. So, to properly manage your condition, you need to pay close attention to your symptoms. An increase in symptoms is a sign that your heart condition is getting worse.

Remember, a weakened heart muscle means less blood is pumped and fluid can back up. The fluid backs up mainly in the lungs, which is why you may have shortness of breath. The weakened heart pumps less blood to your tissues throughout your body. This is why you may feel weak and tired.



## Common factors that can make heart failure worse

Your heart failure symptoms get worse when you have:

- **too much salt**
- **too much fluid**



These two items—salt and fluid—are closely related. Salt acts like a sponge and collects fluid. This causes water retention. You can also take in too much fluid by what you drink and eat.

Extra fluid makes your heart work harder and may cause or worsen swelling. Therefore, it's important that you follow a low-salt diet and limit fluids.

You may also notice your condition get worse if you do not take your medications properly. Take the right amount of each medication at the right time.

## 3 Key Steps to Success with Heart Failure

1. **Avoiding salt**
2. **Weighing yourself daily**
3. **Taking your medication**

# 1. Avoiding salt

Cutting down on salt may seem difficult, but the more you know about salt in your diet, the easier it will be to make healthy food choices.

It is recommended that you consume less than 2,000 mg (2 grams) of salt per day. But how much is that? Well, 2,000 mg is about one teaspoon of salt.

Although you may not expect to find much salt in certain foods, many contain large quantities of salt. Become familiar with high-salt foods (as shown in the list below) and avoid or limit these foods.

## Avoid or limit foods with high salt

- bacon
- barbecue sauce
- bouillon cubes
- canned foods like soups and tomatoes
- cheese
- clamato juice
- crackers
- instant gravies
- instant noodle soup
- ketchup
- packaged salad dressings
- party snacks (salted)
- pickles
- prepared frozen dinners
- processed foods
- processed meats (cold cuts, sausage)
- salted nuts
- sauerkraut
- sea salt (natural, but still salt)
- soya sauce
- teriyaki sauce
- tomato juice



## Tips to reduce salt

- Take the salt shakers off the table.
- Read food labels. Salt goes by many names, so look for the words **salt, sodium, monosodium glutamate, MSG, soda, Na, and NaCl**. Food label ingredients are listed in order of quantity (from highest to lowest). Therefore, if these words are listed in the first five ingredients, it means there is a lot of salt in the product—avoid these foods. Also read the nutrition label to see the grams of sodium (if listed).
- To season food, use herbs, garlic, onions, spices, lemon, pepper, and vinegar instead of salt.
- Use more fresh foods (lower in salt) than packaged or processed foods.
- Do not use salt when cooking. Use a low-salt cookbook to help you find different ways of cooking without salt.
- Be aware that some medications contain a lot of salt. Examples would be some antacids and laxatives. Check with your pharmacist about this before you buy any non-prescription medication.

## When eating at a restaurant:

- Ask what menu items are low in salt.
- Tell the server that you cannot have much salt, and if they could please not add much salt in preparing your order.
- Ask for sauces and dressings on the side. That way, you control how much goes on your food.
- Be aware that most breaded foods are usually high in salt.
- Make the best choice you can.

## Healthy food choices

Although it may seem that there are many foods to avoid, a better approach is to focus on the many healthy foods you can have.

Make sure you eat a balanced diet. It should include all **four food groups**:

### 1. Grain products

- whole grain breads, hot cereals, cereals low in sodium, rice, pasta, and other grains like couscous, bulgur, barley

### 2. Fruits and vegetables

- fresh or frozen fruits and vegetables

### 3. Milk products

- skim or 1% milk, yogurt, low-sodium cottage cheese, cheeses low in salt (try to have no more than 1 oz. (28 g) of cheese per day)

### 4. Meats and alternates

- unsalted canned fish or rinsed regular canned fish, fresh or frozen meats, poultry, fish, seafood, unsalted nuts or seeds

## Tips for a healthy diet

If you are taking a diuretic (water pill), you may need more of the mineral called potassium in your diet. Ask your doctor about this.

Some foods can change how certain medications work. Check with your doctor or pharmacist if any foods react with your prescription or non-prescription medications.

Ask your doctor if you should be on a low-fat diet.

## Limiting fluids

If you limit how much fluid you drink in a day, it will be easier for your heart to pump blood. This will make you feel better; for example, you may breathe easier and have less swelling.

Drink no more than 6 to 8 cups of fluid in one day. This includes the water you drink to take your medication. Soup, Jell-O, ice cream, pudding, coffee, tea, milk, beer and other alcohol, and pop should all be counted as fluid.



### If your mouth is dry, you can:

- chew gum
- rinse your mouth with water
- suck on hard candies
- suck on orange or lemon wedges
- brush your teeth often

Remember, too, that salt acts like a sponge and keeps extra fluid in your body. By reducing salt in your diet, you will help reduce the amount of fluid that builds up in your body.

## 2. Weighing yourself daily

Sudden weight gain can be an early sign of fluid build-up. Be sure to weigh yourself every morning and record your weight in the Weight Chart at the back of this booklet.



### Tips for weighing yourself

- empty your bladder first
- weigh yourself before breakfast
- use the same scale every day
- wear the same amount of clothing every time you weigh yourself

Remember to do the same things each day before you weigh yourself.

**Call your doctor if you gain more than 2 lbs (1 kg) in two days, or 5 lbs (3 kg) in one week.**

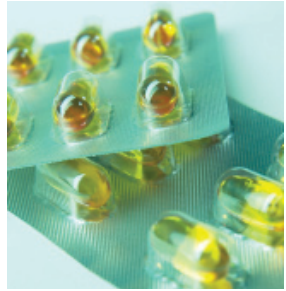
Your doctor may develop a plan so that you can change your medications on your own to get rid of the excess fluid. This would probably mean increasing the dose of your water pill temporarily. Talk to your doctor to see if this would work for you.

Weighing yourself is an important part of managing your heart failure. **Be sure to:**

- weigh yourself every day
- keep a record of your daily weights and symptoms

### 3. Taking your medication

Many medications are available to control heart failure. Heart failure cannot be cured; however, medications can help control the symptoms. They make it easier for the heart to work and they make you feel better. Some medications may also prevent your condition from getting worse.



Usually, more than one medication is required. Your doctor may first prescribe only one medication and add others later. The amount of medication (dose) may also be changed. This is normal. Every person responds differently to medication, and your doctor will try to find the right combination of medications that works best for you.

**Taking your medication** is an important part of managing heart failure. Your medications:

- reduce symptoms
- improve your quality of life
- help you live longer
- reduce the chance that you'll be hospitalized

It may take time for your medication to make you feel better. It's important, therefore, to take your medication properly. Take your medication:

- even if you think it is not working
- even if you feel well
- exactly as your doctor, pharmacist, or nurse tells you (too much could be harmful; too little may have no effect)
- at the same time each day

***Never stop taking your medication or change the dose without talking to your doctor.***

## Know Your Medication

You don't have to know everything about your medication. It is important, however, to know three things about your medication.

1. what the medication is for
2. the dosage (the amount you need to take)
3. when to take the medication

Be a partner in your own care. If you take the time to understand these three things, you will be better prepared to manage your condition. Ask your doctor or pharmacist what each medication is for and what benefits you can expect when taking it.

It is a good idea to **keep a list** of all the medications you are currently taking. Write down:

- the name of the medication
- the amount you take
- what time you take the medication
- what the medication is doing to help you with your heart failure

If you fill all your prescriptions at one pharmacy, the pharmacist can print a complete record of your medications. You can also record your medication in the Medication List at the back of this booklet.

A medication list can help you, your family and friends, and other health care professionals that may need to know. Carry this list with you—in your wallet or purse—as you do with your health card.

# Tips for Taking Your Medication Properly

Take your medication with a regular activity, such as when you:

- have meals
- brush your teeth
- go to bed

Use a medication organizer

- pill organizer (Dosett®)
- bubble or blister pack (ask your pharmacist)



Get a guide for each medication (ask your pharmacist or doctor)

- what benefits should you expect
- when is the best time to take the medication
- what are possible side effects
- what can be done to reduce side effects

Include the help of others

- ask for help from your doctor, pharmacist, or other health care professionals
- ask family and friends for help
- ask questions, questions, and more questions!

If You Miss a Dose

- **Never double your dose** to catch up.
- If it's less than half way to your next dose, take the medication as soon as you remember.
- If it's more than half way to your next dose, skip the missed dose and take your next dose at your usual time.

## When to See Your Doctor

Paying attention to change is an important part of managing your condition. Call your doctor right away if you notice any of the following:

1. weight gain of more than 2 lbs (1 kg) in two days, or 5 lbs (3 kg) in one week
2. increased shortness of breath
3. increased swelling
4. ongoing cough
5. need for extra pillows when sleeping due to shortness of breath

***Do not wait until you are really sick to call your doctor.***

## Role of Family and Friends

Your family and friends are important people to help you manage your heart failure. Do not feel as though you must manage this condition on your own. People who are close to you can help in many different ways. Family and friends can:

- share the responsibility of learning about heart failure
- help you remember to take your medications regularly
- fill your pill organizer
- follow a low-salt diet
- help if things get worse—they can:
  - recognize the symptoms
  - know what to do to help

# 3

## Key Steps to Success SUMMARY

1. Avoiding salt
2. Weighing yourself daily
3. Taking your medication

By following these three key steps, you can help yourself live a healthier life.



# Weight Chart

It is important to weigh yourself every day. Do it first thing in the morning, after emptying your bladder, and before breakfast. Record your weight and symptoms in the table.

**Call your doctor if you gain more than 2 lbs (1 kg) in two days, or 5 lbs (3 kg) in one week.**

Month: \_\_\_\_\_ Year: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Notes: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# Medication List

It is a good idea to keep a list of all the medications you are currently taking. This medication list can help you, your family and friends, and other health care professionals that may need to know.

Medication Name \_\_\_\_\_

Amount Taken \_\_\_\_\_ Time Taken \_\_\_\_\_

What is the medication for? \_\_\_\_\_

Medication Name \_\_\_\_\_

Amount Taken \_\_\_\_\_ Time Taken \_\_\_\_\_

What is the medication for? \_\_\_\_\_

Medication Name \_\_\_\_\_

Amount Taken \_\_\_\_\_ Time Taken \_\_\_\_\_

What is the medication for? \_\_\_\_\_

Medication Name \_\_\_\_\_

Amount Taken \_\_\_\_\_ Time Taken \_\_\_\_\_

What is the medication for? \_\_\_\_\_

Medication Name \_\_\_\_\_

Amount Taken \_\_\_\_\_ Time Taken \_\_\_\_\_

What is the medication for? \_\_\_\_\_

Medication Name \_\_\_\_\_

Amount Taken \_\_\_\_\_ Time Taken \_\_\_\_\_

What is the medication for? \_\_\_\_\_

Medication Name \_\_\_\_\_

Amount Taken \_\_\_\_\_ Time Taken \_\_\_\_\_

What is the medication for? \_\_\_\_\_

Medication Name \_\_\_\_\_

Amount Taken \_\_\_\_\_ Time Taken \_\_\_\_\_

What is the medication for? \_\_\_\_\_