



## Living Well with Heart Failure

### What does “heart failure” mean?

Heart failure is a chronic health condition that needs lifelong management. It occurs when the heart muscle is weakened and cannot pump as strongly as before. This results in less oxygen reaching the organs and muscles in your body, which can cause you to feel very tired and short of breath. There is no cure for heart failure, but treatment can make you feel much better, keep you out of hospital and live longer.

### What causes heart failure?

Heart failure often develops after other conditions have damaged or weakened your heart, such as:

- heart attack
- high blood pressure
- disease of a heart valve
- infection caused by a virus
- abuse of alcohol or street drugs
- unknown causes

### Symptoms of heart failure:

- feeling short of breath
- waking up at night feeling short of breath
- swelling in your feet, legs or abdomen
- weight gain
- fatigue or getting tired more easily

### Manage Heart Failure By:

- decreasing amount of sodium (salt) in your diet
- taking your medicines as prescribed
- weighing yourself daily
- paying attention to any changes in your symptoms
- exercising and staying active
- avoiding alcohol and smoking
- seeing your doctor regularly
- drinking less than 8 cups of fluid a day



Understanding your symptoms can help you recognize signs that your heart failure may be getting worse.

**Symptoms I have had are:**

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**Catching the flu or pneumonia is much worse when you have heart failure. Protect yourself by getting an annual flu shot and a pneumonia vaccine.**



## Medications used for treating Heart Failure:

There are several types of medicines that are used to manage heart failure. You likely will be taking several medications prescribed by your doctor.

1) **Diuretics** (“water pills”) – this group of drugs works in your kidneys to get rid of extra fluid through your urine.

I am taking: \_\_\_\_\_

2) **Angiotensin converting enzyme inhibitors** (ACE inhibitors) – these drugs work by opening up the blood vessels and making it easier for the heart to pump blood throughout your body. Your blood pressure may be lowered and your heart won't have to work as hard. Use of ACE inhibitors for heart failure contributes to a longer, healthier life.

I am taking: \_\_\_\_\_

3) **Beta-blockers** – these drugs may also lower your blood pressure and heart rate and can improve how the heart muscle works. They can block harmful chemicals in your body that can make heart failure worse. Use of beta-blockers in heart failure contributes to a longer, healthier life.

I am taking: \_\_\_\_\_

4) **Spironolactone** – this drug can block a harmful stress hormone in your body that can make heart failure worse. If you take this medication, you will need to have your blood tested regularly to make sure the levels of “potassium” in your blood is normal.

I am taking: \_\_\_\_\_

5) **Angiotensin Receptor Blockers** (ARB) – These medications may lower blood pressure and reduce the stress on your heart and are sometimes used to treat heart failure.

I am taking: \_\_\_\_\_

**Remember to take your medication at the same time everyday. Take your medications even when you feel well.**

**Always make sure to check with your doctor or healthcare provider before taking any over-the-counter medicine or herbal supplements.**