

# You and your heart



*Living with heart failure*

*This book can be used to work with your nurse and doctor, to make your own plan of taking care of your heart. Please bring it with you when you come to clinic or see your doctor*

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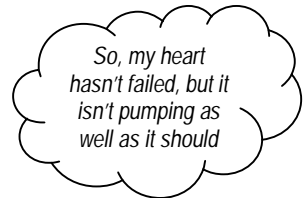
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## What is Heart Failure?

Heart failure means that the heart is not pumping blood through the body as well as it should.

When the heart cannot pump normally, blood backs up into the blood vessels around the lungs and fluid leaks into the lungs.



- The fluid causes congestion. Congestion is the word used when an organ such as the lungs, becomes clogged up with fluid.
- This makes it hard to breathe.
- Fluid can also back up into the veins, causing swollen legs feet and stomach.

Heart failure usually starts when another problem makes the heart weak or stiff so it doesn't pump or fill normally.



### Causes can be:

- Ischaemic heart disease
- Alcohol
- Infection of the heart muscle
- Thyroid disease
- Idiopathic- this means the cause is unknown
- Heart valve disease
- Lung disease
- Diabetes
- High blood pressure

As the heart struggles to pump out all its blood, the muscles fibres of the heart stretch. Over time the heart can become larger and weaker.

When treatment begins, the work of the heart becomes easier. Research has shown that you can feel better and lead a more normal life with treatment that involves:

- Taking the right medications at the right dose.
- Taking your pills at the right time every day.
- Eating less salt.
- Stopping smoking.
- Regular exercise.
- Losing weight if you are overweight.
- Drinking very little or no alcohol.
- Managing your symptoms such as sudden weight gain.

*The following pages will talk about:*

- The right pills for you.
- How to do more exercise.
- How to eat less salt.
- How to feel better.
- How to manage your symptoms.

# Medications

## The right pills at the right dose

The right pills can improve the way your heart works and help protect the heart from further damage. This should help you get fewer symptoms.

**No matter how well you feel, don't stop taking them without talking to your doctor or nurse.**



It is important that you talk to your doctor or nurse if you are planning to become pregnant. **These tablets should not be taken during pregnancy as some may harm the baby.**

## Beta-Blockers

Beta-adrenergic blocking agents such as \_\_\_\_\_

block the effects of harmful stress hormones, which can make heart failure worse and add to your symptoms.

Sometimes, people feel worse for a few weeks after starting a beta-blocker but then will start to feel better.

- If you have more fluid build up in your body, tell your doctor or nurse so that your medications can be altered.
- If you are wheezy or have more shortness of breath tell your doctor or nurse right away.

## ACE Inhibitors

ACE inhibitors (angiotensin-converting enzyme inhibitors) such as \_\_\_\_\_ keep your body from making as much angiotensin (a substance produced by your body that can make heart failure worse). Less angiotensin helps the arteries to relax and then the heart can pump more easily.

They do not cause many side effects but:

- Talk to your doctor or nurse if you have a cough that doesn't go away - it could be due to this tablet, or there may be another cause.
- Get immediate help if you notice swelling of the lips or throat.

## ARBs

ARB's (Angiotensin Receptor Blockers) such as \_\_\_\_\_ block the effect of angiotensin.

They do not cause many side effects but can lower your blood pressure.

Ask your doctor or nurse how often you should have a blood test to check your kidneys and potassium.

## Digoxin

Digoxin may help your heart beat more strongly so that more blood is pumped out with each beat.

*However, not everyone with heart failure needs digoxin.*

Too much digoxin can cause:

- Loss of appetite, bad taste in the mouth.
- Bluish or yellowish vision.
- Palpitations, skipped heartbeats or rapid beats.

If you notice any of these problems, call your doctor or nurse right away. They can help decide if you need other treatment.

## Aldosterone Antagonists

Aldosterone Antagonists such as \_\_\_\_\_ block the effects of a stress hormone called aldosterone, which can make heart failure worse.

Aldosterone antagonists can:

- Cause breast enlargement or tenderness, especially in men.
- Increase potassium levels.

**If you become unwell with diarrhoea or vomiting, stop this tablet.** Talk to your doctor or nurse before restarting it again.

You will need to have your blood checked regularly to make sure your potassium level is normal.

## Anticoagulants

Anticoagulants such as warfarin, are tablets that lessen the risk of blood clots. Some people with heart failure may need anticoagulants.

If you take warfarin, be sure to ask your doctor or nurse about:

- Any activities you should avoid.
- Having your blood checked regularly.
- Any changes you might need to make to your diet.

Notes:

## Other tablets

### Diuretics

These tablets such as \_\_\_\_\_ are also called **water pills** and help your body get rid of extra fluid. Less fluid in your lungs makes breathing easier.

Less fluid also means less swelling in other parts of your body.

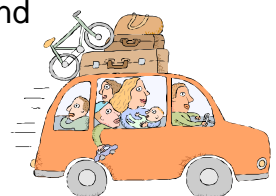
- Sometimes a diuretic causes people to lose potassium, which is needed for the body to work properly. You may need to take potassium pills as well.
- Your blood should be checked from time to time to make sure that your potassium level is normal.
- It is a good idea to weigh yourself daily to check you are not losing or gaining too much fluid.
- Talk to your doctor or nurse about what your weight should be.

### When should you take diuretics?

- Most diuretics are short-acting and will work during the next 3 hours.
- Your diuretic works best when you are resting and on an empty stomach, so try to take your tablet early in the morning before you get up.
- If you take a diuretic two times a day, take the second dose when you are resting and without food. Take it before 4pm if possible.

### If you are planning a long trip or day out:

- For several days work out when you urinate the most after taking your diuretic. Then plan your trip away at a time when your diuretic is not as active.
- You could take your diuretic at a different time of day. Perhaps you could take it a few hours before you plan to go out or wait until you get home and take it then.
- Do take your diuretic when you are staying away from home.



## Potassium

Potassium is an electrolyte your body needs to work properly. Many diuretics (water pills) can make people lose potassium as well as water.

- If you are taking potassium tablets, you should have your blood checked often to make sure your potassium level is normal.

## If you are having leg cramps

- You might be losing too much potassium or magnesium with your diuretic.
- Ask your doctor or nurse if you need a check of your blood levels.
- Do not take any extra potassium tablets without talking to your doctor or nurse.
- Make sure you are having enough fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds and whole grains to make sure you are getting enough magnesium and potassium.

## Other tablets

## Medicines to avoid

Some medicines should not be taken because they can make heart failure worse. Always tell your doctor or nurse about any other pills you may be taking.

### Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory medicines

Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Medicines sometimes called NSAIDs are used to relieve pain and some can be bought without a prescription.

- NSAIDs include medicines such as aspirin, ibuprofen, indomethacin, naproxen, and diclofenac.
- Talk to your doctor or nurse about other tablets you could use instead.

### Alternative or Herbal Therapy Interactions

Ingredients in some alternative pills can interfere with the action of heart failure pills and this could be harmful to you. You should avoid:

- Ephedra (ma huang).
- Ephedrine metabolites.
- Chinese herbs.
- Hawthorne (crataegus) products.

And if you are taking blood thinners you should not take:

- Garlic tablets
- Ginseng
- Gingko
- Coenzyme Q-10

## Tips to taking your tablets

Most people with heart failure need a few sorts of pills. It is vital that you take all of your pills as prescribed, even when you are feeling better.

- Take your pills at the same time each day.
- Put your medication card and pills somewhere you will see them every day.
- **Get your new prescription a week before you run out of tablets.**
- Maybe your pharmacist could put your pills in blister packs.
- Or maybe you could get a pillbox labelled with the days of the week and times of day. Fill the box at beginning of the week.
- Or maybe you could keep a chart of when you should take your pills and mark the chart after you take them.
- If you forget a dose of pills, take them as soon as you remember. If the next dose is due in the next few hours, wait and take your usual dose at your usual time.
- Take your medicines with you when you leave home, so you can take them on time. If you are going away for a few days, take extra medications and carry them with you.

## If you are feeling dizzy:

Because several heart failure medicines can cause dizziness, spacing them out at different times throughout the day may help.

Tell your doctor or nurse if you:

- Are dizzy for more than five to ten minutes after you get up.
- Are so dizzy that you have trouble walking around.



If you feel dizzy when you wake up in the morning:

- Try doing ankle pumps by moving your feet back and forward about ten times before you stand up.
- Dangle your legs over the side of the bed before sitting. Then sit at the side of the bed for a minute before standing up.

## Notes about pills:

## Common feelings about heart failure

Heart failure can cause physical problems that can make you feel anxious or depressed but that does not mean you have to put up with these feelings.

Anxiety or worry affects people in different ways and can include:

- ◆ Problems concentrating or sleeping.
- ◆ Feeling restless.
- ◆ Changes to emotions such as being bad tempered, grumpy or miserable.
- ◆ Not wanting to go out or being afraid of being left alone.
- ◆ Feeling OK then suddenly being struck by a sense of dread, butterflies in the stomach and weakness.



*I'd like to go  
out but maybe  
I'll get short of  
breath*

For some people, these feelings may improve or go away when they know more about their condition. For others, however, the feelings may go on or even get worse over time. People can feel depressed or anxious in different ways such as:

- ◆ Feeling low or tearful
- ◆ Being unable to concentrate
- ◆ Having trouble sleeping
- ◆ Being irritable
- ◆ Feeling despair
- ◆ Feeling tired, with no energy

## What can you do

- Talk about these feelings with someone you trust such as a close friend or family member.
- Spend more with family and friends doing things you enjoy or just talking together.
- Find out more about your heart problem so that you can help control it.
- Follow your treatment plan so that you feel better and have fewer symptoms.
- Feeling better physically can make you feel happier so maybe you could join a cardiac exercise group
- Try to find new activities to enjoy.
- Treat yourself to something special whenever you are feeling down such as going to the movies, shopping, or just visiting or phoning friends.



*If I walk as far as the shop I can buy a new book to read and some bread for lunch*

## Every day

- Make sure you do some sort of exercise and try to get outside, even if it is only for a few minutes.
- Do something you enjoy and something you feel is useful.
- Get a good night's sleep. If you don't sleep well, talk to your doctor or nurse about what may be useful to help you.

## When to get help

If you are feeling really down or anxious, talk to your doctor or nurse who can refer you to a specialist.

The specialist can help you talk through some of your concerns

Some people may need medications to help them.

## Notes

## Less salt

You may have heard people talk about a *low-sodium diet* or a *low-salt diet* and may wonder if they are the same. Doctors, nurses and dieticians usually use the words *sodium* and *salt* to mean the same thing.

It is important to have less sodium in what you eat because salt can make the body hold on to extra water.

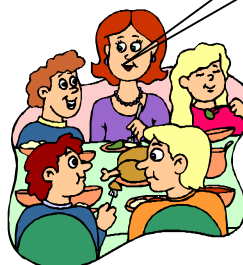


- ◆ The sodium causes extra fluid to build up in your body.
- ◆ The extra fluid makes your heart work harder.
- ◆ It also causes symptoms such as swelling of the ankles, feet or abdomen, shortness of breath, or weight gain.
- ◆ It may take some time for your taste buds to adapt to less sodium (about 2 months).

## How to have less sodium

Sodium is a mineral found naturally in foods but usually in small amounts. It is found in large amounts in table salt and often in processed foods.

- ◆ Try to not use salt in cooking and don't add salt at the table.
- ◆ Try not to use stock cubes, powders, seasoned salt or kelp in cooking.
- ◆ Check any processed foods with the list provided on the following pages to make the best choice.
- ◆ Read labels carefully to check for the word *salt*, *sodium chloride* or *brine*.
- ◆ **Low in sodium means less than 120mgs per 100gms.**
- ◆ If you are unsure about a food and its salt content
  - leave it out
- ◆ When eating out or buying takeaway foods ask for “no added salt” or no MSG.



They won't mind you asking for no added salt, and no MSG

- ◆ Check with your doctor or dietician before using salt substitutes, or antacids.
- ◆ Try to eat fresh foods that are naturally low in sodium,
- ◆ Add herbs, spices, pepper and lemon juice to your cooking to help boost the flavour.

The following lists will help to choose low sodium foods:

Food	Best choice	Avoid most of the time
<b>Milk and Milk Products</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Fresh Milk</li> <li>◆ Yoghurt</li> <li>◆ Flavoured Milk</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Buttermilk</li> <li>◆ Malted milk</li> <li>◆ Thick shakes</li> </ul>
<b>Meat, Fish, Chicken</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Fresh or frozen</li> <li>◆ Beef, lamb, pork</li> <li>◆ Veal, chicken, turkey, fish</li> <li>◆ Tuna in spring water</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Smoked, salted, cured and canned fish,</li> <li>◆ meat or poultry such as bacon, corned beef, ham, sausages, hot dogs, saveloys, polonies, salami,</li> <li>◆ canned salmon, tuna in brine</li> </ul>
<b>Eggs</b>	Fresh eggs	Pickled eggs
<b>Meat Substitutes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Tofu</li> <li>◆ Low sodium peanut butter</li> <li>◆ Dried peas, lentils and dried beans</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Tofu in brine</li> <li>◆ Vegemite/marmite/peanut butter</li> <li>◆ Tinned beans and tinned bean products</li> </ul>
<b>Vegetables</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Fresh, frozen, dehydrated and low sodium tinned vegetables</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Regular tinned vegetables and vegetable juices</li> <li>◆ Sauerkraut</li> <li>◆ Pickled vegetables, olives, gherkins, onions</li> <li>◆ Frozen vegetables in sauce</li> </ul>
<b>Fruits</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ All fruits and juices, raw, stewed and dried</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ None</li> </ul>
<b>Cheese</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Low fat cottage cheese</li> <li>◆ Cottage cheese</li> <li>◆ Ricotta</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ All other cheeses and cheese spread especially high sodium ones such as – feta, parmesan, blue vein and gouda</li> </ul>

Food	Best Choice	Avoid most of the time
<p><b>Potato, Rice, Pasta</b> Do not add any salt, cheese or other high sodium ingredients when cooking</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Potatoes/kumara</li> <li>◆ Rice, barley, noodles, spaghetti, macaroni, lentils, burghul wheat, dried beans and split peas</li> <li>◆ Lower salt baked beans and spaghetti</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Instant potato mixes</li> <li>◆ Salted or lite potato chips and snack chips</li> <li>◆ Instant rice and pasta mixes</li> <li>◆ Tinned spaghetti and baked beans</li> <li>◆ Instant noodles</li> </ul>
<p><b>Sandwich Fillings</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Tuna in spring water</li> <li>◆ Egg, Roast beef/lamb</li> <li>◆ Chicken (fresh, cooked)</li> <li>◆ Turkey (fresh, cooked)</li> <li>◆ Salad vegetables, tomato</li> <li>◆ Jam/honey</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Smoked Salmon</li> <li>◆ Luncheon, Salami</li> <li>◆ Pastrami, Bacon</li> <li>◆ Ham, Sausages</li> <li>◆ Pate</li> </ul>
<p><b>Breads: limit bread to 6 slices/day</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Fruit breads</li> <li>◆ Cinnamon buns</li> <li>◆ Pita bread</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Savoury breads</li> <li>◆ Focaccia</li> <li>◆ Cheese breads</li> </ul>
<p><b>Crackers</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Ryvita Country Crackers</li> <li>◆ Real Foods corn thins</li> <li>◆ Arnotts Adera cream wafers</li> <li>◆ Sakata rice crackers – satay chicken</li> <li>◆ Huntly &amp; Palmer low fat cream cracker</li> </ul>	<p>Most other crackers are high in sodium</p>
<p><b>Butter Margarine, Oil</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Unsalted butter</li> <li>◆ Peanut oil</li> <li>◆ Canola oil</li> <li>◆ Salad and cooking oil</li> <li>◆ Soya bean oil</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Use oil, butter and margarine in <b>small</b> amounts as high in sodium</li> </ul>
<p><b>Soups</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Home-made or</li> <li>◆ reduced sodium commercial soups</li> </ul>	<p>All regular tinned or dehydrated commercial soups and Instant soup mixes</p>

Food	Best Choice	Avoid most of the time
<p><b>Sauces are usually high sodium</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Watties lite tomato sauce</li> <li>◆ Tomato Salsa-El Paso</li> <li>◆ Watties tomatoes in spicy pepper sauce</li> <li>◆ Watties Tuscan style tomatoes</li> <li>◆ Mother Earth Pasta Sauce</li> <li>◆ Watties Just Add Simmer Sauce – Sweet &amp; Sour chicken</li> <li>◆ Foodtown Signature Range sauces</li> <li>◆ Dolmio Reduced Salt Bolognese sauce</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Most other sauces are very high in sodium e.g. soy sauce, oyster sauce, Worcestershire sauce and chilli sauce.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Cereals</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Puffed corn</li> <li>◆ Muesli</li> <li>◆ Porridge (without salt)</li> <li>◆ Hubbards Thank Goodness</li> <li>◆ Very Fruitful Flakes</li> <li>◆ Kellogs Justrite mini wheats</li> <li>◆ Sanitarium Weetbix, Puffed wheat, Honey Puffs,</li> <li>◆ Uncle Toby's instant oats</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Coco puffs/pops</li> <li>◆ Cornflakes</li> <li>◆ Rice Bubbles /ricies/rice pops</li> <li>◆ Bran &amp; sultanas</li> <li>◆ Bran flakes</li> </ul>
<p><b>Seasonings, Dressings</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Fresh or dried herbs</li> <li>◆ Fresh or dried spices</li> <li>◆ Pepper</li> <li>◆ Vinegar</li> <li>◆ Lemon or lime juice</li> <li>◆ Chopped onion</li> <li>◆ Fresh garlic</li> <li>◆ Mustard powder</li> <li>◆ Wine/Sherry</li> </ul>	<p>Salt, salt substitutes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Garlic salt</li> <li>◆ Celery salt</li> <li>◆ Onion salt</li> <li>◆ Sea salt</li> <li>◆ Rock salt</li> <li>◆ Kelp salt</li> <li>◆ MSG</li> <li>◆ Bovril/Bisto</li> <li>◆ Stock cubes/powder</li> <li>◆ Vegemite/Marmite</li> </ul>

Food	Best Choice	Avoid most of the time
<p><b>Snack Foods</b> Most are higher in sodium – need to be considered as ‘treat’ food</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Plain unsalted nuts</li> <li>◆ Popcorn plain or sweet <i>Less salty chips –</i></li> <li>◆ Bluebird grain waves</li> <li>◆ Eta – Naturals - Ripples</li> <li>◆ Shultz pretzels</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ All salted nuts</li> <li>◆ Salted popcorn</li> <li>◆ Most salted potato chips</li> <li>◆ Commercial dips</li> </ul>
<p><b>Drinks</b></p>	<p>Any drinks except those listed in next column</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Tomato juice</li> <li>◆ Vegetable Juice</li> <li>◆ Soda water such as Schwepps</li> <li>◆ energy drinks such as Red Bull, Ikon</li> <li>◆ Electrolyte replacement drinks such as Powerade,</li> <li>◆ Bovril, Beef tea</li> </ul>

Notes:

## Advice if you have Constipation

It is quite common to be constipated because of:

- not enough fluids
- not enough fibre
- irregular meals or not enough food
- inactivity
- some medications

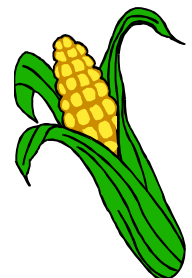
The following guidelines may help relieve or prevent constipation.

### Include more fibre in your diet

Fibre is found in fruit, vegetables, breads and cereals.

The following foods are good sources of fibre:

- wholemeal and mixed grain bread
- porridge, Weetbix, muesli and other bran cereals
- vegetables (leave the skin on if you can) eg. peas, corn
- legumes eg. dried beans (including baked beans), lentils, split peas
- **kiwi fruit** and **prunes** have a natural laxative effect and you may find it useful to include them in your diet.



**Cooking bran** can be added to foods such as cereal or yoghurt. Start with two teaspoons and gradually increase to two tablespoons. However **eating more than two tablespoons per day is not advisable**. It is also important to have fluid with meals that include added bran

Increase the amount of fibre in your diet **gradually**, not all at once.

Eat three meals a day at regular times. **Always include breakfast.**

## Fluids

**Discuss the amount of fluid you should be drinking with your doctor or nurse.**

Water is a good choice but so is diluted fruit juice, soup, tea, coffee or low fat milk. Fibre absorbs fluid, creating the bulk that is needed to assist with normal bowel function.

Continue to eat a **variety** of foods each day including:

- **6** servings of breads and cereals (at least **4** servings should be wholemeal / wholegrain).
- At least **5** servings of vegetables and fruit.
- **2** servings of milk and milk products
- 1-2 servings of lean meat, fish, dried beans, lentils, chicken or eggs



- **Regular physical activity** such as walking, gardening or swimming.

## Notes

## Becoming more active with heart failure

One of the best ways to keep feeling well is to keep active. In the past people with heart failure were told to rest and take things easy. Now research shows that activity including exercise, work, and sex is healthy and safe for most people with heart failure.

- ◆ The key to becoming active is to start with something you like.
- ◆ You may have given up something you like to do, such as gardening, fishing or bowling. If you build your muscles, you may have more strength to do more of the things that you enjoy.



## How to start

- ◆ Start with things you can do fairly easily. It is a good idea to include some walking.
- ◆ Work out something you can do now that is fairly easy. Perhaps you might try something like a five-minute walk and 15 minutes of weeding the garden.
- ◆ You should work at a level that you don't have to rest the next day, and be able to practice this every day for a week.
- ◆ Plan to do a bit more each week.
- ◆ The goal for most people is to do at least 30 minutes of activity per day for most days of the week.



## How hard?

- ◆ If you can't talk in sentences while you are exercising, you are working too hard and should slow down.
- ◆ However, if you can whistle or sing, you may be going too slow and should speed up.

*As long as we can talk in sentences, being a bit puffed is OK-*



## When to take a break

Do not exercise or increase your activities when you:

- Have more shortness of breath at rest or more symptoms than usual.
- Feel exhausted.
- Have a fever, infection, or feel ill.
- Have chest pain.
- Have had a major change in your pills.

## Doing more of what you enjoy

As you become more active, you will notice that you have more energy. However, you may still find it hard to do as much as you used to do.

- ◆ Don't wait until you are worn out to rest.
- ◆ Rest between activities so that you have more energy and can get more done.
- ◆ Don't rush as this can make you feel worse.
- ◆ Do less when it is too hot or too cold, or immediately after a meal when your heart is already working hard.

By making some changes to jobs you need to do, you can save energy for the things you like to do:

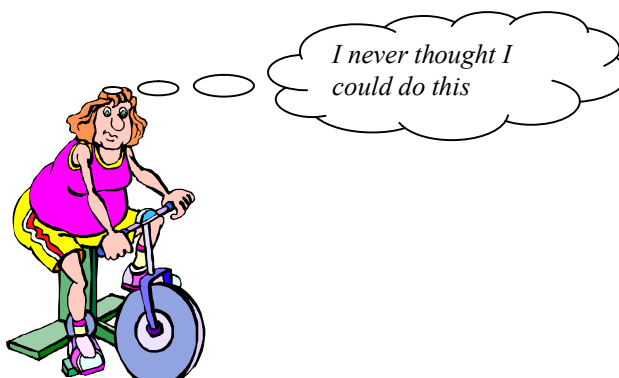
- Pull heavy objects instead of pushing them
- Put a tall stool in the kitchen. You can sit while preparing food and cleaning up if you are tired.
- Put on a towelling dressing gown after a shower so that you can get you almost dry without any effort.



## Do you need help to become more active?

There is an exercise programme at the hospital, which can help you if you are very unfit, or easily short of breath, or just unsure of what you can do.

Talk to your doctor or nurse and asked to be referred to the exercise programme at the hospital.



## Getting back to work

There is no reason to stop working. It is normal to feel that work is not possible. It may be better to wait until you are feeling better before you make your mind up about going back to work.



- ◆ If you are able to do more exercise before you go back to work, this will help you get more energy to do your job.
- ◆ You may have to start work part-time and slowly increase the number of hours you work, to help your body adjust to work.
- ◆ You may have to change or adapt your job if it involves heavy work or see if you can work part-time or do something easier.
- ◆ If your job is very stressful, you may have to work out how to lessen the stress.



- ◆ *You should also talk to your doctor or nurse about returning to work.*
- ◆ Some people will not be able to work and may be eligible for a benefit. If you cannot return to work at this time, ask your doctor about the level and time of disability to expect.

## Sex and Heart failure

Many people with heart failure wonder if they can still have sex. The answer is yes. Exercise is good for you and making love is another form of exercise. It is not dangerous to your heart.



- Just as with any other activity, you should not have sex if you are feeling ill, are very short of breath, or are having chest pains.
- If you are anxious, tired all the time or are unfit, it is normal to not feel like making love. If you slowly increase your exercise, you will find that you have more energy.
- Pick a time for sex when you feel relaxed and comfortable.
- Avoid sex within 2 hours of eating a big meal or 3 hours after drinking alcohol.
- The room should be warm and relaxing.
- Choose positions that feel comfortable.
- Avoid positions in which you support your weight with your arms
- Some people with heart failure may have problems including decreased sex drive, problems with ejaculation, impotence, or inability to have an orgasm or climax.
- If intercourse is difficult for you, try to find other ways of being physically close and intimate with your spouse or partner.

Do talk to your doctor or nurse. Often your doctor or nurse will not bring up the topic of sex, but you should feel free to bring it up at any time.

## Notes

## Managing your symptoms

If you take notice of any symptoms as soon as they start, you will be able to manage them better.

The easiest way is to weigh yourself daily. This will help you find out if fluid is building up in your body. One kilogram weight gain over a day means an extra litre of water in your body.

- Weigh yourself the **same time** every day, on the **same scales** and in the **same clothes**.
- This could be each morning, after you urinate and before you have breakfast.
- Write this weight down in your diary. Bring your diary to clinic or to your GP
- **Your target weight**, that is, your weight with no extra fluid, is\_\_\_\_\_
- If your weight *increases* above this, follow the action plan
- If your weight *decreases* below your target weight, you may need less frusemide



## Action plan

- **Take your pills as prescribed**
- Weigh yourself at the same time each day.
- Record your weight.

## Take action if you notice any of the following:

- **An increase in your weight such as \_\_\_\_\_**
- Increased shortness of breath.
- You wake up at night because it is hard to breathe.
- You are more tired, feel unwell, or have lost your appetite.
- More swelling in your feet, legs or hands.
- Your waistband feels much tighter.

## Action

- Rest more with your feet up.
- Do less.
- Drink less.
- Let your GP know.

**Notes:**

<b>DRUG</b>	<b>ON WAKING</b>	<b>B/FAST</b>	<b>LUNCH</b>	<b>DINNER</b>	<b>BEDTIME</b>

date

<b>DRUG</b>	<b>ON WAKING</b>	<b>B/FAST</b>	<b>LUNCH</b>	<b>DINNER</b>	<b>BEDTIME</b>

**date**

<b>DRUG</b>	<b>ON WAKING</b>	<b>B/FAST</b>	<b>LUNCH</b>	<b>DINNER</b>	<b>BEDTIME</b>

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**date**