

Living with Congestive Heart Failure



Louis Stokes Cleveland VA Medical Center

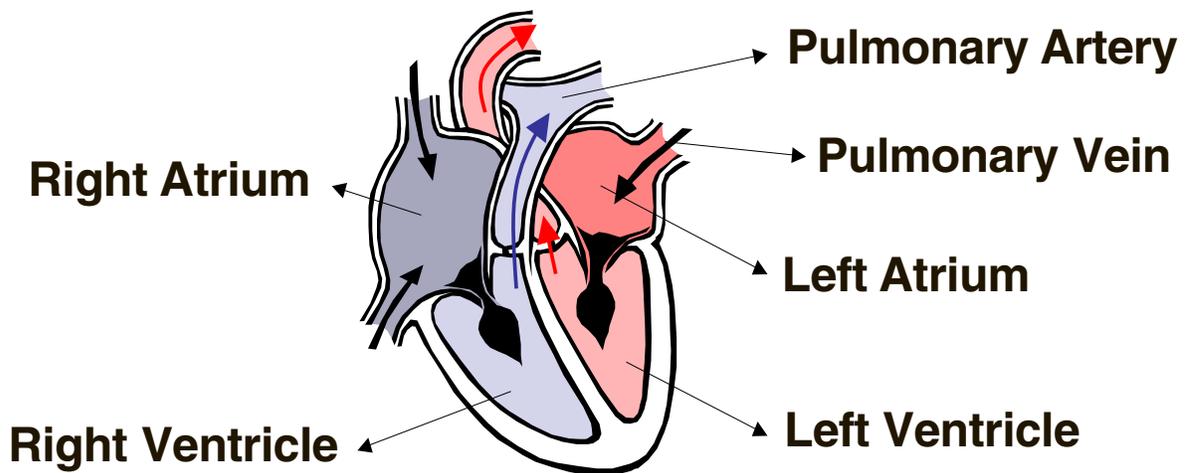
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How a Healthy Heart Works

The Parts of the Heart:

- Four chambers hold the blood as it moves through the heart. The upper chambers are called **atria** and the lower chambers are called **ventricles**.
- The heart muscle pumps blood from chamber to chamber
- Four **valves** act like one-way doors, separating the chambers, to keep the blood moving forward. Valves open to let blood through and close to keep it from moving backward
- The **Pulmonary Artery** carries blood that needs oxygen from the heart to the lungs. The **Pulmonary Veins** carry oxygen-rich blood from the lungs to the heart



The Flow of Blood:

- The **right side of the heart** pumps the blood to the **lungs**.
- In the lungs, the blood receives **oxygen**.
- The oxygen-rich blood travels back to the **left side of the heart**.
- The left side of the heart pumps the blood to the **organs, limbs, brain, and all the other parts of the body**.
- After your body uses up the oxygen in the blood, it sends the blood back to the right side of the heart and the process starts again.

You Have Congestive Heart Failure!

What is Congestive Heart Failure?

- Congestive Heart Failure is also known as CHF or Heart Failure.
- In CHF, your heart does not pump as well as it should, and the blood backs up in your veins.
- A backup in the veins of the lungs causes shortness of breath.
- A backup in the veins of the legs causes swelling or edema.

What are the Signs and Symptoms of CHF?

Think G HEARTS!

Gain in weight

Hard time doing the activities used to

Energy is low

Ankle, feet, or leg swelling

Restroom many times at night

Thinking becomes confused

Shortness of breath

What is the Treatment?

CHF cannot be cured but it can be controlled with the use of:

- Medications
- Diet
- Controlled Activity
- Lifestyle Changes

Important!

Call Your Health Care Provider if:

- Your breathing becomes more difficult.
- You gain 3 pounds in 3 days or 5 pounds in one week.
- Your feet or ankles swell more than usual.
- You pass less water.
- You notice you're getting tired faster.
- You begin coughing at night.
- You think you are having side effects from your medication.
- You become dizzy or you faint.
- You have tightness or pain in your chest.



Medications



- Be sure that all of your doctors know about everything you are taking. This includes prescription and over-the-counter medicines, and dietary supplements such as vitamins and herbs.
- Make sure your doctor knows about any allergies and bad reactions you have had to medicines.
- When your doctor writes you a prescription, make sure you can read it.
- Ask for information about your medicines in terms you can understand—both when your medicines are prescribed and when you receive them.
 - What is the medicine for?
 - How am I supposed to take it, and for how long?
 - What side effects are likely? What do I do if they occur?
 - Is this medicine safe to take with other medicines or dietary supplements I am taking?
 - What food, drink, or activities should I avoid while taking this medicine?
- When you pick up your medicine from the pharmacy, ask: Is this the medicine that my doctor prescribed?
- If you have any questions about the directions on your medicine labels, **ask**.
- Ask your pharmacist for the best device to measure your liquid medicine. Ask questions if you're not sure how to use it.
- Ask for written information about side effects your medicine could cause.
- Ask your doctor or pharmacist which medications can be taken with meals.

- Keep track of your medications. Keep a written schedule or use a pillbox that is marked with the days of the week and the time of the day. Fill the pillbox at the beginning of each week. You only have to open each day’s section to take your pills for that day and time.

| SUN | MON | TUES | WED | THU | FRI | SAT |
|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| MORN |
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| EVE |
| BED |

- Take your pills at the same time each day. If you take them when you regularly do something else, like when you brush your teeth or eat a meal, it will help you remember.
- Do not skip or increase doses unless your doctor tells you to do this.
- If you accidentally miss a dose do not “double up” or take it with the next dose.
- Make sure you have enough medication on hand so you don’t run out. Order more medication when you still have a two-week supply left.
- Carry a list of your medications in your wallet or purse. Show the list to any doctor you go to for treatment. Also show it to your pharmacist before you buy any prescription or nonprescription medication. Your pharmacist can tell you which medications can cause problems when taken with each other.
- Keep medicines stored in a cool, dark place out of reach of children. The bathroom medicine cabinet is not a good place. The bathroom becomes too humid when you shower or bathe.

Common Medications for CHF

| Type | How It Works | Important Information | Report to Your doctor |
|----------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Digoxin (Heart Pill) | Helps your heart pump stronger | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not skip doses. | Loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, yellow vision, blurred vision, heart skipping beats, heart beating faster or slower than usual. |
| Diuretics (Water Pill) | Water Pills help rid your body of excess water in your lungs or feet and ankles. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take early in the day. Stand up slowly to avoid dizziness. | Dizziness, weakness, skin rash, sudden weight changes, abdominal or muscle cramps, swelling of feet or legs. |
| Potassium | Replaces minerals which may be lost through diuretics. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take with meals to lessen stomach distress. | Nausea, vomiting, confusion, leg cramps, numbness or tingling in hands, feet, or lips, irregular heartbeat, weakness or heaviness in legs. |
| Ace Inhibitors (Blood Pressure/ Heart Pill) | Lowers the blood pressure and slows your heart rate. This lessens the work your heart has to do. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dizziness, light headedness can occur until you adjust to the dosage. Do not take other medicines unless discussed with your doctor. Have blood pressure checked regularly. | Headache, rash, racing heartbeat, dizziness that does not go away, swelling of face, mouth, hands, feet, trouble breathing or swallowing. |
| Beta Blockers (Blood Pressure/ Heart Pill) | Lowers the blood pressure and slows your heart rate. This lessens the work your heart has to do. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drowsiness, Dizziness, light headedness can occur until you adjust to the dosage. Do not stop abruptly. | Dizziness that does not go away, swelling of face, mouth, hands, feet, trouble breathing or swallowing. |

Diet

A diet high in sodium (salt) can cause your body to retain water, this increases your heart's workload. Your heart has to work much harder to pump this extra water. People with CHF need to pay special attention to the sodium in their diet, so they do not add to their heart's workload. Too much sodium in your diet can also cause swelling, weight gain, and shortness of breath.

Eating less sodium is one of the most important things people with CHF can do. Here are some tips to help you lower the sodium in your diet.

Tips for eating less salt:

- **Do not put a salt shaker on the table.**
- **Do not add salt to food when cooking.** See the salt-free seasonings list below.
- **Ask your health care provider or dietitian about the use of salt substitutes.** They may contain extra potassium, which may or may not be appropriate.
- **Use fresh or frozen vegetables** whenever possible. If you must use canned vegetables, drain and rinse canned foods before preparing them to remove some of the salt.
- **Read labels for sodium content.** See “Label Reading” section.
- **AVOID** these salty seasonings:
 - Seasoned salts, garlic salt, and onion salt
 - BBQ sauce, chili sauce, and steak sauce
 - Mustard and catsup
 - Soy sauce and Worcestershire sauce
 - Meat tenderizer
 - Cooking sherry or cooking wine
 - Bouillon Cubes
 - Monosodium glutamate (MSG)

Try these salt-free seasonings:

- Pepper
- Garlic Powder
- Herbs such as oregano, basil, rosemary, thyme, dill, and sage
- Cumin
- Red Pepper Flakes
- Onions, chives, and scallions

Lowering the amount of salt in your diet can be challenging, because many foods you are used to eating are high in salt. The following foods are usually high in sodium (but read the labels, because some may be available in a low-salt form):

- Salted, cured, and processed meats such as ham, bacon, sausage, salami, salt pork, bologna, and hotdogs.
- Canned soups and dry soup mixes.
- Instant meals, such as flavored rice or pasta mixes and potato sidedishes.
- Preseasoned mixes (tacos, chili, sauces, gravies, etc).
- Prepackaged frozen dinners (unless one serving has less than 800 mg of sodium)
- Fast food.
- Cheeses.
- Snack foods such as crackers, pretzels, potato chips, tortilla chips, microwave popcorn, salted nuts, and pickles.
- Canned meats and fish. Water packed tuna or salmon tends to be lower in salt.
- Instant cooked cereals such as grits, cream of wheat, and oatmeal.
- Canned vegetables and tomato juice.
- Salted butter and margarine
- Prepared mixes for pancakes, muffins, and cornbread.
- Salad dressings.
- Buttermilk.
- Softened water.

Label Reading

You will need to start reading food labels to check the salt content (listed as “sodium”). The “nutrition facts” panel lists sodium in milligrams (mg). The American Heart Association recommends that people CHF should choose foods that have less than 140 mg of sodium per serving, and less than 2400 mg of sodium per day.

- Sodium-Free: less than 5 mg of sodium per serving.
- Very low-sodium: 35 mg or less per serving.
- Low-sodium: 140 mg or less per serving.
- Unsalted, No salt added, or without added salt: made without the salt that is normally used, but still contains sodium that is a natural part of the food.

| Nutritional Facts | | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|------------------------|----------------|
| Serving Size ½ cup (114g) | | | |
| Servings Per Container 4 | | | |
| Amount Per Serving | | | |
| Calories 90 | | • Calories from fat 30 | |
| | | | % Daily Value* |
| Total Fat | 3g | 5% | |
| Saturated Fat | 0g | 0% | |
| Cholesterol | 0mg | 0% | |
| Sodium | 300mg | 13% | |
| Total Carbohydrate | 13g | 4% | |
| Dietary Fiber | 3g | 12% | |
| Sugars | 3g | | |
| Protein | 3g | | |
| | | | |
| Vitamin A | 80% | • Vitamin C | 60% |
| Calcium | 4% | • Iron | 4% |
| *Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs: | | | |
| | Calories | 2,000 | 2,500 |
| Total Fat | Less than | 65g | 80g |
| Sat Fat | Less than | 20g | 25g |
| Cholesterol | Less than | 300mg | 300mg |
| Sodium | Less than | 2,400 mg | 2,400mg |
| Total Carbohydrate | | 300g | 373g |
| Fiber | | 25g | 30g |
| Calories Per Gram | | | |
| Fat | 9 | • Carbohydrate | 4 • Protein 4 |

GOAL: To eat foods that have \leq 140 mg sodium per serving. If a serving is an entire meal (frozen dinner), \leq 800 mg sodium is suggested.

Fluid

- Your doctor may want to limit the amount of fluid that you drink each day, including any liquids taken with medications.
- You may have to keep a record of the amount of fluid that you drink each day.
- Keep track of intake of the following liquids and foods (and anything else that seems similar), which count as part of the daily total:

Fluids

- Water
- Juice
- Ice Cubes
- Coffee
- Milk
- Soup
- Tea
- Soda

Foods

- Yogurt
- Pudding
- Ice Cream
- Sherbet
- Gelatin

You can keep track of the fluid that you drink by:

- Recording all the fluid that you drink during the day.

OR

- Mark a large container with the amount of fluid that you are allowed for the day. Each time you consume fluid, pour an equal amount of water into the container. When the container is filled you have reached your daily limit.

Use these measurements to help you track your fluid intake:

1 cup = 8 ounces = 240 cc

4 cups = 32 ounces = 1 qt = 1000 cc = 1 liter

1 ml = 1 cc

1 ounce = 30 cc

Your doctor has prescribed a fluid restriction of:

_____ cc (_____ Cups per day)

Recording Your Weight

An accurate recording of weight is important in the treatment of CHF. A rapid weight gain might be a sign that you are retaining fluid and need a change in your treatment plan.

- Weigh yourself at the same time using the same scale.
- Weigh in the morning after you've used the bathroom and before you eat breakfast.
- Record your weight on a chart.
- Your doctor will tell you how often to weigh yourself. It will vary from 2 times a week to daily depending upon your condition.



Activity

CHF may prevent you from being as active as you once were.

The following is a list of some general guidelines for physical activity:

- Avoid over exertion, especially activity that causes dizziness, moderate shortness of breath, or chest discomfort.
- Avoid physical activity in extreme temperatures or when you do not feel well
- Avoid physical activity 1-2 hours after eating.
- Avoid tasks that require lifting heavy objects.
- If it hurts or causes pain, it is wrong! Avoid activities that cause you pain.
- Short walks are a good way to begin your physical activity.

Don't exercise beyond outlined recommendations from your doctor. Remember, ***“More is not always better”***

It's important to pace your activity. Talk to your Health Care Provider if you would like a formal exercise program.

Rest

Planning rest periods throughout the day allows for your heart muscle to regain its strength. You may feel better if you take periodic naps. Be sure to put your feet up.

Life Style Changes

- **Stop smoking!**
- Smoking narrows your blood vessels and reduces the amount of oxygen in your blood.
- The VA has a smoking cessation clinic. You can ask your doctor for more information about it.
- Try to keep your weight within a normal range. Extra weight makes your heart work harder.
- Try to find ways to deal with stress.
- Talk with your health care provider about alcohol intake.
- Keep your doctors appointments and follow your doctor's instructions.
- Take your medications as ordered



Other Steps You Can Take

- **Speak up if you have questions or concerns.**
You have a right to question anyone who is involved with your care.
- **Make sure that someone, such as your health care provider, is in charge of your care.**
- **Make sure that all health professionals involved in your care have important health information about you.**
Do not assume that everyone knows everything they need to.
- **Ask a family member or friend to be there with you and to be your advocate** (someone who can help get things done and speak up for you if you can't).
Even if you think you don't need help now, you might need it later.
- **Know that “more” is not always better.**
It is a good idea to find out why a test or treatment is needed and how it can help you. You could be better off without it.
- **If you have a test, don't assume that no news is good news.**
Ask about the results. Learn about your condition and treatments by asking your doctor and nurse and by using other reliable sources.
- **Remember take time to enjoy your life.**
Stay close to friends and family who will give you support and encouragement..



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