



# How Can I Live With Heart Failure?

About 5.7 million Americans are living with heart failure today. In fact, it's one of the most common reasons why people 65 and older go into the hospital.

Fortunately, heart failure can be treated. Getting good medical care, following doctor's orders and learning about heart failure will help you lead a comfortable life.

You can help by taking your medicine as your doctor tells you, and by following your eating and exercise plans.



Following your doctor's advice and taking your medications as directed are important steps to managing your heart failure.

## What medicine might I take?

The goal of heart failure treatment is to help you live a longer, better-quality life. Treating the causes of heart failure with medication can lessen tiredness (fatigue), shortness of breath and swelling. It also helps improve your energy level so you can be physically active.

Here are some examples of medicines that may be prescribed:

- 1. Angiotensin Converting Enzyme (ACE) Inhibitor:** lowers blood pressure and decreases the heart's workload.
- 2. Angiotensin Receptor Blocker (ARB):** lowers blood pressure.
- 3. Diuretic:** helps your body get rid of extra water and sodium.
- 4. Angiotensin-Receptor Neprilysin Inhibitor (ARNI):** improves artery opening and blood flow, reduces sodium (salt) retention, and decreases strain on the heart.
- 5. Beta-Blocker:** lowers blood pressure and slows heart rate.

**6. Digoxin:** helps your heart pump better.

**7. Vasodilator:** lowers blood pressure by relaxing blood vessels and allowing them to open (dilate).

## What should I watch out for?

Tell your doctor right away if...

- You gain three or more pounds in a day or so.
- You see swelling in your feet, ankles or other parts of your body.
- It's hard to breathe.
- You can't do what you could do the day before.
- You have "the flu."
- You get a fever.
- You have chest pain.

Other ways to tell that your heart might not be working the way it should be include:

- Coughing up pinkish, blood-tinged mucus.
- Confusion, difficulty thinking, dizziness or lightheadedness.
- Changes in your eating habits or appetite. *(continued)*



### What can I do?

- Visit the doctor and follow his or her advice.
- Read food labels and avoid foods high in sodium (salt).
- Start an aerobic exercise plan as your doctor advises.
- Keep up your interests and be upbeat!

### My doctor's advice

Ask your doctor to fill in the blanks with recommendations that will help you recover.

Medicine notes: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Diet notes: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Exercise notes: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



Work with your doctor to develop an exercise plan that's right for you.

### HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

- 1 Call **1-800-AHA-USA1** (1-800-242-8721), or visit **heart.org** to learn more about heart disease and stroke.
- 2 Sign up to get *Heart Insight*, a free magazine for heart patients and their families, at **heartinsight.org**.
- 3 Connect with others sharing similar journeys with heart disease and stroke by joining our Support Network at **heart.org/supportnetwork**.

### Do you have questions for the doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write your questions for the next time you see your healthcare provider.

For example:

**How can my family help me?**

**Should I stay in bed?**

### My Questions:

We have many other fact sheets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk, manage disease or care for a loved one. Visit **heart.org/answersbyheart** to learn more.