

Heart Failure: What to Know

 The heart inside the body.

Heart failure means that your heart isn't able to pump blood the way it should. The heart might not be able to pump enough blood and oxygen to your body tissues.

Heart failure is usually a long-term condition. Be sure to take good care of yourself and follow your treatment plan.

Different stages of heart failure have different treatment plans. The stages are:

- Stage A: At risk for heart failure.
 - You don't have any symptoms, but you're at risk for getting heart failure.
- Stage B: Pre-heart failure.
 - You don't have any symptoms, but your heart has changes that show heart failure.
- Stage C: Symptomatic heart failure.
 - You have symptoms of heart failure, and your heart has changed in ways that show heart failure.
- Stage D: Advanced heart failure.
 - You have symptoms that make it hard to live your daily life, and you often need to stay in the hospital because of heart failure.

What are the causes?

Heart failure may be caused by:

- High blood pressure.
- Coronary artery disease. This is when cholesterol and fat build up in the arteries.
- Heart attack.
- Heart valves that don't open and close properly.
- Damage to the heart muscle.
- An infection of the heart muscle.
- Lung disease.

What increases the risk?

- Getting older. The risk of heart failure goes up as a person ages.
- Using tobacco or nicotine products.
- Being overweight.
- Using alcohol or drugs.
- Having any of these conditions:
 - Diabetes.
 - Abnormal heart rhythms.
 - Thyroid problems.
 - Chronic kidney disease.
- Having a family history of heart failure.
- Having taken medicines that can damage the heart.

What are the signs or symptoms?

Symptoms of heart failure include:

- Shortness of breath. This may happen when doing things like climbing stairs.

- Losing or gaining weight for no reason.
- Trouble breathing when lying flat.
- A fast heartbeat.

Other symptoms may include:

- Feeling tired and not having energy.
- Feeling dizzy or light-headed. You may feel like you're going to faint.
- Not wanting to eat as much as normal.
- Feeling like you may vomit.
- Feeling confused.

How is this diagnosed?

Heart failure may be diagnosed based on:

- Your symptoms and medical history.
- A physical exam.
- Blood tests.
- Other tests. These may include:
 - Chest X-ray.
 - Electrocardiogram (ECG).
 - Echocardiogram.
 - Cardiac MRI.
 - Cardiac catheterization and angiogram.

How is this treated?

 A prescription pill bottle with an example of a pill.

Heart failure may be treated with:

- **Medicines.** These can be given to:
 - Treat blood pressure, lower heart rates, or make the heart muscle pump stronger.
 - Cause the kidneys to remove extra salt and water from the blood through your pee.
- **Changes in your daily life.** These may include:
 - Eating a healthy diet.
 - Staying at a healthy weight.
 - Quitting tobacco or drug use.
 - Limiting or avoiding alcohol.
 - Getting regular exercise.
 - Taking part in a cardiac rehab program. This program helps you improve your health through exercise, education, and counseling.
- **Surgery.** Surgery can be done to:
 - Open blocked arteries.
 - Repair valves.
 - Put a device in the heart. This might be a pacemaker, a device to treat abnormal heart rhythms, or a device to help the heart pump better.
- A heart transplant. This means getting a healthy heart from a donor. This is done when other treatments have not helped.

Follow these instructions at home:

- Treat other conditions as told by your health care provider. These may include high blood pressure or lung disease.

- Learn as much as you can about heart failure.
- **Keep all follow-up visits. Your provider will want to check on your condition.**

Where to find more information

- **American Heart Association:** heart.org
- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:** cdc.gov/heartdisease

This information is not intended to replace advice given to you by your health care provider. Make sure you discuss any questions you have with your health care provider.

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Heart-Healthy Eating Plan

Many factors influence your heart health, including eating and exercise habits. Heart health is also called coronary health. Coronary risk increases with abnormal blood fat (*lipid*) levels. A heart-healthy eating plan includes limiting unhealthy fats, increasing healthy fats, limiting salt (*sodium*) intake, and making other diet and lifestyle changes.

What is my plan?

Your health care provider may recommend that:

- You limit your fat intake to _____ % or less of your total calories each day.
- You limit your saturated fat intake to _____ % or less of your total calories each day.
- You limit the amount of cholesterol in your diet to less than _____ mg per day.
- You limit the amount of sodium in your diet to less than _____ mg per day.

What are tips for following this plan?

Cooking

Cook foods using methods other than frying. Baking, boiling, grilling, and broiling are all good options. Other ways to reduce fat include:

- Removing the skin from poultry.
- Removing all visible fats from meats.
- Steaming vegetables in water or broth.

Meal planning

 A plate with examples of foods in a healthy diet.

- At meals, imagine dividing your plate into fourths:
 - Fill one-half of your plate with vegetables and green salads.
 - Fill one-fourth of your plate with whole grains.
 - Fill one-fourth of your plate with lean protein foods.
- Eat 2½–4 cups of vegetables per day. One cup of vegetables equals 1 cup (91 g) broccoli or cauliflower florets, 2 medium carrots, 1 large bell pepper, 1 large sweet potato, 1 large tomato, 1 medium white potato, 2 cups (150 g) raw leafy greens.
- Eat 1½–2½ cups of fruit per day. One cup of fruit equals 1 small apple, 1 large banana, 1 cup (237 g) mixed fruit, 1 large orange, ½ cup (82 g) dried fruit, 1 cup (240 mL) 100% fruit juice.
- Eat more foods that contain soluble fiber. Examples include apples, broccoli, carrots, beans, peas, and barley. Aim to get 25–30 g of fiber per day.
- Increase your consumption of legumes, nuts, and seeds to 4–5 servings per week. One serving of dried beans or legumes equals ¼ cup (90 g) cooked, 1 serving of nuts is ½ oz (12 almonds, 24 pistachios, or 7 walnut halves), and 1 serving of seeds equals ½ oz (8 g).

Fats

- Choose healthy fats more often. Choose monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats, such as olive and canola oils, avocado oil, flaxseeds, walnuts, almonds, and seeds.
- Eat more omega-3 fats. Choose salmon, mackerel, sardines, tuna, flaxseed oil, and ground flaxseeds. Aim to eat fish at least 2 times each week.
- Check food labels carefully to identify foods with trans fats or high amounts of saturated fat.
- Limit saturated fats: These are found in animal products, such as meats, butter, and cream. Plant

- **Avoid fried foods.**

General information

- **Eat more home-cooked food and less restaurant, buffet, and fast food.**
- **Limit or avoid alcohol.**
- **Limit foods that are high in added sugar and simple starches** such as foods made using white refined flour (white breads, pastries, sweets).
- Lose weight if you are overweight. Losing just 5–10% of your body weight can help your overall health and prevent diseases such as diabetes and heart disease.
- **Monitor your sodium intake, especially if you have high blood pressure.** Talk with your health care provider about your sodium intake.
- Try to incorporate more vegetarian meals weekly.

What foods should I eat?

Fruits

All fresh, canned (in natural juice), or frozen fruits.

Vegetables

Fresh or frozen vegetables (raw, steamed, roasted, or grilled). Green salads.

Grains

Most grains. Choose whole wheat and whole grains most of the time. Rice and pasta, including brown rice and pastas made with whole wheat.

Meats and other proteins

Lean, well-trimmed beef, veal, pork, and lamb. Chicken and turkey without skin. All fish and shellfish. Wild duck, rabbit, pheasant, and venison. Egg whites or low-cholesterol egg substitutes. Dried beans, peas, lentils, and tofu. Seeds and most nuts.

Dairy

Low-fat or nonfat cheeses, including ricotta and mozzarella. Skim or 1% milk (liquid, powdered, or evaporated). Buttermilk made with low-fat milk. Nonfat or low-fat yogurt.

Fats and oils

Non-hydrogenated (trans-free) margarines. Vegetable oils, including soybean, sesame, sunflower, olive, avocado, peanut, safflower, corn, canola, and cottonseed. Salad dressings or mayonnaise made with a vegetable oil.

Beverages

Water (mineral or sparkling). Coffee and tea. Unsweetened ice tea. Diet beverages.

Sweets and desserts

Sherbet, gelatin, and fruit ice. Small amounts of dark chocolate.

Limit all sweets and desserts.

Seasonings and condiments

All seasonings and condiments.

The items listed above may not be a complete list of foods and beverages you can eat. Contact a dietitian for more options.

What foods should I avoid?

Fruits

Canned fruit in heavy syrup. Fruit in cream or butter sauce. Fried fruit. Limit coconut.

Vegetables

Vegetables cooked in cheese, cream, or butter sauce. Fried vegetables.

Grains

Breads made with saturated or trans fats, oils, or whole milk. Croissants. Sweet rolls. Donuts. High-fat crackers, such as cheese crackers and chips.

Meats and other proteins

Fatty meats, such as hot dogs, ribs, sausage, bacon, rib-eye roast or steak. High-fat deli meats, such as salami and bologna. Caviar. Domestic duck and goose. Organ meats, such as liver.

Dairy

Cream, sour cream, cream cheese, and creamed cottage cheese. Whole-milk cheeses. Whole or 2% milk (liquid, evaporated, or condensed). Whole buttermilk. Cream sauce or high-fat cheese sauce. Whole-milk yogurt.

Fats and oils

Meat fat, or shortening. Cocoa butter, hydrogenated oils, palm oil, coconut oil, palm kernel oil. Solid fats and shortenings, including bacon fat, salt pork, lard, and butter. Nondairy cream substitutes. Salad dressings with cheese or sour cream.

Beverages

Regular sodas and any drinks with added sugar.

Sweets and desserts

Frosting. Pudding. Cookies. Cakes. Pies. Milk chocolate or white chocolate. Buttered syrups. Full-fat ice cream or ice cream drinks.

The items listed above may not be a complete list of foods and beverages to avoid. Contact a dietitian for more information.

Summary

- Heart-healthy meal planning includes limiting unhealthy fats, increasing healthy fats, limiting salt (*sodium*) intake and making other diet and lifestyle changes.
- Lose weight if you are overweight. Losing just 5–10% of your body weight can help your overall health and prevent diseases such as diabetes and heart disease.
- Focus on eating a balance of foods, including fruits and vegetables, low-fat or nonfat dairy, lean protein, nuts and legumes, whole grains, and heart-healthy oils and fats.