

Heart Failure

What Your Treatment Plan Might Include

Heart failure is best managed through a combination of heart healthy habits, medications and paying close attention to signs that suggest your condition may be flaring up or getting worse. Together, these treatments aim to lower the stress on your heart.

Treatments can help you **feel better, live longer** and **prevent hospital stays**.

Treatment Goals

Center on:

- Treating any conditions that may have led to heart failure
- Improving your heart's pumping function, or at least slowing how quickly the condition gets worse
- Easing symptoms
- Helping you live longer and with a better quality of life
- Taking into account what matters most to you, and helping you function and adjust to how to be able to do certain tasks, pursue hobbies, travel, take care of children or enjoy life events.



Key Tools in the Toolbox



Keep a close watch on signs and symptoms.

One of the best ways to manage heart failure well is to pay close attention to how you feel from day-to-day. For example, what is a “good day” with heart failure? What about a “bad day”? What does that look and feel like? There are many things that can affect how you feel and some days you may feel less well than others. Check in with yourself each day and report any changes.



Mind emotional health and stay connected.

Don't forget to talk about how you are feeling emotionally too, if you are having trouble coping or with relationships. It's normal to feel sad, angry and discouraged sometimes.



Lifestyle changes.

May include:

- Exercising to strengthen the heart and ease symptoms
- Choosing heart healthy foods
- Limiting salt (sodium) to help your body get rid of extra fluid
- Restricting how much water or fluid you drink, for some people
- Weighing yourself each day to watch for any weight gain that might mean your body is holding onto too much fluid
- Keeping stress levels in check



Medications.

Don't be surprised if you are taking several medications. These are essential to manage heart failure, and must be taken as directed to be effective. It may take time for these medications to work and you may need to change your dose, but stick with it.

Talk openly with your care team if you are worried about costs, have trouble remembering to take your medications, or experience side effects.



Cardiac rehabilitation, if you qualify.

Cardiac rehab provides both a supervised fitness program and a support system that helps patients adopt healthy behaviors to best manage their condition.

Eligibility may depend on your insurance coverage and ejection fraction (a measure of how well your heart is pumping blood out of the heart).



Manage other conditions that can make heart failure worse.

Half of people with heart failure have five or more co-existing conditions. Many of these can aggravate heart failure if they aren't treated.

Talk with your care team about other health issues, including:

- Blockages in the heart's arteries (coronary artery disease)
- Chronic kidney disease
- Diabetes
- Sleep apnea
- Atrial fibrillation or other heart rhythm problems
- Thyroid disease (having either too much or too little thyroid hormone)
- Heart valve disease (when one or more of the heart's valves doesn't work properly)
- Depression or anxiety
- High blood pressure or cholesterol
- Heavy use of alcohol, illicit drugs such as marijuana and cocaine
- Previous cancer treatment
- Anemia or iron deficiency



Follow up visits and tests.

You will have frequent follow-up visits and tests to gauge how you are doing. It's important to keep up with these appointments.



Devices, when needed.

At some point, a device to help the heart work may be needed. If the medications aren't enough, there are additional options, including:

- Pacemaker/defibrillators
- Heart pumps, and
- Heart transplants, in rare cases

Be sure to share any concerns that you have now and in the future about your care plan. Your provider wants to know what matters most to you, and this may change over time.