

Nutrition and Lifestyle Choices to Manage Heart Failure

What is Heart Failure?

Heart failure means that your heart is weaker than usual, and it doesn't pump as strongly as it should.

Heart failure can make you tired and short of breath. Some people find that their bodies keep salt (sodium) and extra water.

What can you do to feel better?

The healthy nutrition and lifestyle choices in this handout can help you to feel better and manage your heart failure.

Symptoms of heart failure can include:

- being short of breath when you're resting or lying flat
- sudden weight gain when your body holds on to fluid
- swelling in your feet, ankles, and legs
- bloating, or a feeling of fullness in your stomach
- losing your appetite

Are you making choices to manage heart failure?

Answer the questions below to help you decide if you're making nutrition and lifestyle choices to help manage your heart failure.

Every *Yes* answer is a healthy way to manage heart failure. If you answer *No* to any of these questions, and you're ready to make healthy changes, use the tips on the following pages to increase your *Yes* answers.

1. Do you record how much fluid you drink every day?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
2. To eat less sodium (salt), do you try to avoid processed and packaged foods?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
3. Do you make your meals at home most of the time?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
4. Do you weigh yourself every day, and record your weight?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
5. Do you know what to do if you have sudden weight gain?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
6. Every week, do you eat 2–3 servings of fish high in omega-3 fats such as salmon, sardines, herring, mackerel, trout, and Arctic char?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
7. Are you able to contact your healthcare team if you need to?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No

Nutrition choices

Limit the fluid you drink

For some people with heart failure, limiting the fluid they drink every day helps them feel better.

- Ask your doctor if limiting your fluid would help you. Some people need to limit fluid to 6–8 cups (1500–2000 mL) a day to feel better.
- It helps to spread out the fluids you drink. Try sipping your fluids throughout the day.
- If you'd like more information about how to limit fluid, ask your healthcare provider to refer you to a dietitian.

Tips to decrease thirst

If you're asked to limit fluids and you're thirsty, try the tips below.

- Suck on sugar-free hard sour candies or chew sugar-free gum.
- Rinse your mouth with water.
- Suck on a few ice chips or a sugar-free frozen ice pop.
- Eat frozen fruits such as grapes, strawberries, peaches, or pineapple chunks.
- Eat crunchy vegetables and fruit like celery, cucumber, green peppers, or apples.

Other everyday tips

- Limit salt (sodium) intake. See the *Limit your salt intake* section on this page.
- Brush and floss your teeth more often to keep teeth clean.
- Use lip balm to keep lips from drying out.
- Ask your doctor or pharmacist for products that help with dry mouth.
- Use a cold air humidifier, especially at night.

Limit your salt intake

Salt acts like a sponge, keeping extra fluid in your body. Your heart has to work harder to pump this extra fluid.

Tips to lower the salt and sodium you eat

- Cook and eat food without adding salt.
- Choose fresh, unprocessed, and homemade foods.
- Flavour your food with herbs, spices, garlic, onion, lemon juice, vinegar, and salt-free seasonings.
- Eat less foods that are higher in sodium:
 - processed and packaged foods
 - restaurant and fast foods
 - pickles, olives, salsa
 - crackers, snack foods, dips
 - deli meats
 - canned and dry soup
 - condiments like:
 - ketchup
 - mustard
 - soy and fish sauce
 - barbecue sauce

Read food labels to help you cut down on the sodium you eat.

On the Nutrition Facts table

- Compare the serving size to the amount you eat.
- For example, if the serving size of a cereal is $\frac{3}{4}$ cup (175 mL) and you ate $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups (350 mL), you would get double of all the nutrients listed on the label.
- Foods are high in sodium if they have a 15% or higher Daily Value for sodium. Limit these foods.
- Foods with 5% or lower Daily Value are low in sodium. Look for these foods.

Nutrition Facts	
Per $\frac{3}{4}$ cup (175 mL/ 175 g)	
Amount	% Daily Value
Calories	160
Fat 2.5 g	4 %
Saturated 1.5 g + Trans 0 g	10 %
Cholesterol 10 mg	
Sodium 75 mg	3 %
Carbohydrate 25 g	8 %
Fibre 3 g	8 %
Sugars 15 g	
Protein 8 g	

← Serving size

Compare brands.
Choose foods with a lower
% Daily Value and a smaller amount of sodium.

Manage your weight

People with heart failure may be at a healthy weight, may carry extra weight, or may lose too much weight.

If you're at a healthy weight, try to stay there.

If you have lost too much weight:

Some people with severe heart failure may lose too much weight because they:

- need more calories than usual
- don't absorb nutrients from food as well as people without heart failure
- lose their appetite and have trouble eating enough food to stay at a healthy weight
- have less energy and feel tired more than usual; this can make it harder to make meals and eat well

If you think you've lost too much weight, try the tips below to get more calories and protein.

- Eat small meals more often.
- Have snacks during the day.
- Choose healthy foods that are higher in calories and protein.
- Some foods higher in calories and protein are:
 - Meat and Alternatives such as meat, fish, poultry, eggs, beans, peas, lentils, nuts
 - higher fat milk products like cheese, 3.25% (homogenized) milk, cream, yogurt with more than 1% milk fat (M.F.)
 - liquid vegetable oils and non-hydrogenated margarine
 - nut butters and seed butters

If you are trying to eat well, but still losing weight, or if you are limiting potassium, ask your healthcare provider to refer you to a dietitian.

If you're carrying extra weight and looking for healthy ways to lose weight, ask your healthcare provider to refer you to a dietitian. Some people with heart failure gain weight as fluid.

Weighing yourself every day helps you and your healthcare team know if weight gain is from fluid. See the *Track your weight* section on this page.

Enjoy fish at least 2 times a week

Eating fish high in omega-3 fats has many heart health benefits.

Choose salmon, sardines, herring, mackerel, trout, and Arctic char.



Eat fresh, frozen, or no salt added canned fish.

Ask your healthcare team about potassium

Some medicines can change the amount of potassium in your blood.

If you want more information about potassium in foods, ask your health care provider to refer you to a dietitian.

Limit the alcohol you drink

Some people with heart failure are much healthier when they drink no alcohol. Alcohol is not a healthy source of calories.

Ask your healthcare provider about alcohol.

If you use alcohol, limit it to 1 drink or less per day for women and 2 drinks or less per day for men. One drink of alcohol is:

- 12 ounces (341 mL) of beer
- 5 ounces (142 mL) of wine
- 1½ ounces (43 mL) of liquor

Alcohol counts as part of your fluid intake.

Lifestyle choices

Track your weight

Recording your weight every day helps you and your healthcare provider know early on if you are keeping extra fluid.

- Weigh yourself at the same time every day after emptying your bladder and before eating.
- Wear the same type of clothing every time you weigh, or wear no clothing.
- Record your weight every day.



Sudden weight gain could mean your body is keeping extra fluids.

Sudden weight gain is:

- gaining more than 2–3 lbs (1–1.4 kg) in one day
or
- gaining more than 5 lbs (2.3 kg) in one week

If you think you have sudden weight gain, here's what to do:

- Follow the plan given to you by your healthcare provider.
- Eat less salt (sodium) than you have been eating.
- Call your healthcare team if you have any of these:
 - increased shortness of breath
 - difficulty breathing when lying down
 - sudden swelling in the legs and ankles
 - extreme tiredness
 - sudden dizziness or heart palpitations

If you smoke, quit

When you quit smoking, your heart doesn't need to work as hard, your blood can carry more oxygen, and your blood vessels are healthier.

For help quitting, talk to your healthcare provider, call 811 (Health Link), or visit albertaquits.ca.

Be active every day

Activity makes you stronger, and may give you a better quality of life.

- Check with your doctor or healthcare provider before you start being active.
- Try to be active every day. If you need to start with a few minutes at a time, that's ok. You can increase your time slowly.



A pedometer counts how many steps you take when you walk. Use a pedometer, and write your steps in a journal. Review your journal to watch your progress, create daily step goals, and stay on track.

Break up your sitting time.

Sitting time is time watching TV, reading, using the computer at work or home, playing video games, or doing hobbies while sitting. Breaking up sitting time helps you to be more active. Below are some tips:

- Get up and stretch or move during commercials when watching TV.
- Stand and move every 30 minutes.
- At work, walk to see a co-worker instead of emailing or phoning.
- Stand and walk around when you talk on the phone.
- Take the long way to the bathroom at work.

Medicine

Take all of the medicine your doctor prescribes.

Talk to your healthcare team before you take:

- any other medicine, like over-the-counter cold, flu, or pain medicine
- vitamin or mineral pills
- herbal supplements or natural health products

Set healthy goals

Now that you've learned about healthy eating and a healthy lifestyle to manage your heart failure, you may be ready to make a few changes.

It can be hard to make too many changes at once. If you make small goals, you'll be more likely to reach your goals.

1. Look at the questions on page 1. Did you answer *No* to any of the questions?
2. If you have *No* answers, choose one *No* that you would like to change to a *Yes*.
3. In the space below, write the change you would like to try.

Ask your healthcare provider if you'd like more help to reach your eating and lifestyle goals.

My goal:
