



Heart Failure Rescue Plan

Treat Early Signs at Home

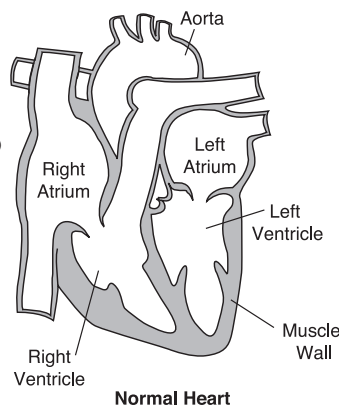
About heart failure

Your heart is a muscle that pumps blood to all parts of your body. Heart failure means that your heart does not pump as strongly as it should. It does not mean your heart has stopped working.

Heart failure affects the lower chambers of the heart, called **ventricles**. It may also affect one or both sides of your heart. Heart failure is also called **congestive heart failure (CHF)**

because as the heart has more trouble pumping blood, it can cause fluid to build up in the body.

Heart failure is a very common heart problem. It can be serious, but early treatment can help you control signs.



Signs of heart failure

- Shortness of breath, especially when you exert yourself
- Problems breathing when lying down flat
- Waking up coughing
- Swelling in your abdomen, legs and feet
- Weight gain due to fluid build up
- Feeling tired or light-headed
- Confusion or having problems thinking
- Nausea or loss of appetite
- Fast or irregular heart rate

Causes

Heart failure can be caused by a number of health conditions, such as:

- Coronary artery disease (CAD), heart attack, valve disease, infection, enlarged heart or other heart problems
- High blood pressure
- Diabetes
- Lung disease
- Alcohol or drug use
- Toxic effects of some medicines

Treatment

Medicines will be ordered to help keep your heart working well. The medicines work together, so you need to be sure to take all your medicines, even if you are feeling better. Talk to your doctor or pharmacist if you have any questions about your medicines.

Common medicines used to treat heart failure may include:

- Angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors
- Angiotensin II receptor blockers (ARB)
- Angiotensin receptor Neprilysin inhibitors (ARNIs)
- Beta blockers
- Mineralocorticoid receptor antagonists (MRAs)
- Diuretics (water pills)

Learn more about these medicines on the next page.



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ACE inhibitors

ACE inhibitors help to lower blood pressure to lessen the amount of work your heart needs to do.

Side effects may include: dizziness, weakness, cough and loss of taste. If you have swelling of your face, tongue or lips, or have trouble breathing, **stop taking the medicine and call your doctor right away or call 911 and get to the nearest emergency room for care.**

Medicine names:

- ☐ benazepril (Lotensin)
- ☐ captopril (Capoten)
- ☐ enalapril (Vasotec)
- ☐ lisinopril (Prinivil, Zestril)
- ☐ ramipril (Altace)
- ☐ other _____

ARB - Angiotensin II receptor blockers

ARBs widen the blood vessels and help increase blood flow when a person cannot take an ACE inhibitor. They work like ACE inhibitors by blocking a hormone in your body. These medicines are used to treat high blood pressure and heart failure, and may be used after heart attack.

Side effects may include: dizziness and weakness. If you have swelling of your face, tongue or lips, **stop taking the medicine right away** and call your doctor.

Medicine names:

- ☐ candesartan (Atacand)
- ☐ losartan (Cozaar)
- ☐ valsartan (Diovan)
- ☐ other _____

ARNis - Angiotensin receptor-neprilysin inhibitors

ARNis widen blood vessels and help increase blood flow away from the heart, like ACE inhibitors and ARBs. The added medicine neprilysin also blocks other hormones to lessen symptoms of heart failure. ARNis can reduce the risk of hospitalization and death from heart failure.

Side effects may include: dizziness and weakness, and changes in blood potassium levels. If you have swelling of your face, tongue or lips, **stop taking the medicine right away** and call your doctor.

Medicine name:

- ☐ sacubitril/valsartan (Entresto)

Beta blockers

Beta blockers improve the heart's ability to relax and block the effect of other hormones in the body.

They slow the heart rate and help control blood pressure. The medicines in this group used to treat heart failure are listed below.

Side effects may include: dizziness, slow heart rate, fatigue, shortness of breath when first starting medicine and sexual dysfunction.

Medicine names:

- ☐ carvedilol (Coreg)
- ☐ metoprolol (Toprol-XL)
- ☐ isoprolol (Zebeta)

MRA - Mineralocorticoid receptor antagonists

MRAs block abnormal hormone levels in heart failure. MRAs may also improve fluid retention, and can help the body hold onto potassium, especially when used with other diuretics.

Side effects may include: dizziness, weakness, tender breast tissue, and changes in kidney function or potassium levels.

Medicine names:

- ☐ spironolactone (Aldactone)
- ☐ eplerenone (Inspra)

Diuretics

Diuretics, or water pills, remove excess sodium (salt) and water from your body by increasing the flow of urine. Your heart can work better, and you may breathe easier when the extra fluid is removed from your body. These medicines are used to treat high blood pressure, heart failure and fluid buildup in lungs, feet or hands.

Side effects may include: dizziness, weakness, muscle cramps, dry mouth and increased thirst.

Medicine names:

- ☐ bumetanide (Bumex)
- ☐ hydrochlorothiazide (HCTZ)
- ☐ furosemide (Lasix)
- ☐ torsemide (Demadex)
- ☐ other _____

Potassium and magnesium supplements

may be ordered to replace the minerals lost when taking water pills. Take these medicines with food and water.

Daily Care

Weigh yourself each morning

Weigh yourself after using the bathroom and before breakfast every morning. Weigh yourself at the same time, wearing clothing of similar weight to get an accurate weight. Place the scale on a flat, hard surface, such as wood or tile flooring, not carpet.

Keep a record of your weight on your calendar, record sheet or in a notepad, so it can be shared with your doctor.

Checking your weight is a good way to know if you may be having fluid buildup. If you **gain 2 to 3 pounds in 24 hours**, or you **gain 5 or more pounds in a week**, your heart failure may be getting out of control. Follow your Action Plan on page 7 if you gain weight.

Eat a low salt (sodium) diet

1. **Limit processed foods**, such as canned soups, chips, cookies, tomato sauces and lunch meats as they often have a lot of added salt and sugar. Choose fresh fruits and vegetables, low-sodium whole grains and low-sodium cheeses as snacks.
2. **Plan for salt across your full day of meals and snacks.** Add lettuce and tomato to sandwiches for flavor instead of condiments like catsup, mustard and mayonnaise that are high in salt. Use herbs to flavor foods instead of salt.
3. **Read nutrition labels** to guide your food choices. Look for products that are sodium free, very low sodium or low sodium.
4. **Buy fresh or frozen foods instead of canned** as much as you can. Choose fresh foods when you can or go for frozen without any added sauces. If you are using canned foods, drain and rinse foods to reduce salt. Rinsing beans, tuna and canned vegetables before using them does remove some, but not all of the salt.

5. **Eat more fruits and vegetables.** Add them to salads, side dishes and main dishes, or eat them plain. They are full of vitamins and low in calories and salt.
6. **Learn to enjoy the natural taste of food.** Many foods are so processed that you may have to learn to get used to foods without salt. Changing how you prepare foods and using spices can help.
7. **Limit condiments with high salt**, such as salad dressing, dip, gravy and sauces. You may want to make your own low salt versions.
8. **Drink low salt or salt free beverages** to save the salt for the foods you eat. Water, coffee, tea, carbonated seltzer water and fruit juices have no or little sodium in them. Limit milk to 2 cups of low fat milk a day.
9. **Ask restaurants for low salt substitutions.** Choose items made to order or items that are grilled, broiled, baked, boiled or steamed instead of fried.
10. **Meet with a dietitian to help you manage a low salt diet.** Talk to your doctor for a referral. Ask for other resources that may help you make food choices that have less salt.

Take your medicines every day as ordered

Even if you are feeling better, take all of your medicines as directed by your provider each day. Plan for refills several days before you run out.

For your safety, talk to your provider **before taking any over the counter medicines.**

Be active each day

Talk to your provider about an exercise program to help you be active. Get at least 30 minutes of activity 3 days a week.

Using My Rescue Medicine

Your rescue medicine

You will use more of your water pill as your rescue medicine.

You likely are taking a water pill each day, but the added “rescue medicine” is to help you remove more fluid from your body if you heart failure signs get worse.

Keep your rescue medicine and this document together, so you know how to take the medicine when needed.

When should I use the rescue medicine?

Extra water pills should only be taken if your heart failure gets worse and you have warning signs. **The rescue medicine is added to your daily dose for 3 days.**

Weight gain of 2 to 3 pounds in 24 hours, or 5 pounds or more in a week is a warning sign.

Other warning signs include:

- Shortness of breath
- Swelling in your feet, ankles, legs or stomach
- Trouble sleeping when you lie flat
- Dry, hacking cough
- Less urine or urine is darker and has a strong smell

If you **gained 2 or more pounds in 24 hours** and you have **one or more of the other warning signs for 24 hours**, you need to **take your rescue medicine.**

How to take your rescue medicine

Your doctor or nurse will review your plan with you, based on your current daily dose. Take the rescue medicine for **3 days.**

My rescue medicine is:

I am to take _____ mg or _____ tablets

_____ time(s) each day for 3 days.

Call your doctor or nurse if you need to start taking your rescue medicine. Follow any other instructions you are given.

Record of My Weight

Weigh yourself after using the bathroom and before breakfast every morning. Weigh yourself at the same time, wearing clothing of similar weight to get an accurate weight. Place the scale on a flat, hard surface, such as wood or tile flooring, not carpet.

Checking your weight is a good way to know if you may be having fluid buildup. If you **gain 2 to 3 pounds in 24 hours**, or you **gain 5 or more pounds in a week**, your heart failure may be getting out of control. Follow your Action Plan if you gain weight.

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Talk to your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care. For a digital copy of this resource, please visit go.osu.edu/pted4477.

For more health information, go to wexnermedical.osu.edu/patiented or contact the Library for Health Information at 614-293-3707 or health-info@osu.edu.

My Heart Failure Action Plan

Doctor: _____ Phone Number: _____

Emergency Contact Phone Number: _____

<p>I am doing well.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breathing without shortness of breath. • Able to do daily activities. • Have little or no swelling. • Have not gained weight. 	<p>Action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue my current medicines. • Eat a healthy, low salt diet. • Check my weight each day. • Be active.
<p>I feel worse. I have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gained 2 to 3 pounds in 24 hours, or 5 or more pounds in a week. • Less of an appetite. • New or worse: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▸ Swelling in feet, ankles, legs or stomach. ▸ Dizziness that last more than 1 minute. ▸ Dry cough. ▸ Shortness of breath. ▸ Tiredness or low energy. ▸ Less need to pass urine. ▸ Other _____ 	<p>Action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue my medicines. • Rest and limit activity. • Take my rescue medicine if I have gained 2 pounds or more and I have any signs that are new or worse for more than 24 hours. • Call my doctor or nurse to report that I am taking my rescue medicine and any changes in my signs. Follow any other instructions they give me. 
<p>I feel I am in danger. I have 1 or more of these signs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feel I can't breathe or I am very short of breath. • New pain, pressure, heaviness or tightness in my chest. • Trouble sleeping when flat in bed, if able to before. • Sweating or sudden weakness or fainting. • Confused or cannot think clearly. • Heart beat is very fast or irregular. 	<p>Action:</p> <p>Call 911 or emergency medical services right now!</p> <p>You need to get to the nearest emergency room for care.</p> 