

HealthyActions

Achieving Your Goals for Healthy Living



Living With Heart Failure

Cholesterol: A waxy film that can build up and clog the blood flow in your body.

Arteries: Tubes that bring fresh blood and oxygen to your heart and body.

Know the Signs and Symptoms of Heart Failure

Talk to your doctor if you have any of these signs or symptoms:

- Shortness of breath or trouble breathing.
- Coughing or wheezing that does not get better.
- Tiredness.
- Swelling in ankles, feet, legs, hands, or abdomen.

What Is Heart Failure?

Heart failure is when your heart has become weak. A weak heart cannot pump blood to the rest of your body very well. This can lead to swelling or fluid settling in your lungs, hands, ankles, or other parts of your body.

What Causes Heart Failure?

Heart failure is caused by damage to your heart muscle. The damage may be from:

- **Coronary heart disease**, which is when cholesterol builds up in your arteries.
- A **heart attack** that damaged your heart.
- **High blood pressure**, which is when blood moves through your arteries with too much force. This makes your heart pump harder. Over time, your heart gets weaker.
- **Diabetes**, which is when too much sugar stays in your blood. Diabetes puts extra strain on your heart and kidneys.

There are many things you can do to improve your health and live a nearly normal life. You can start by seeing your doctor regularly and following the **Healthy Heart Checklist**.

You can make good choices every day to keep your heart healthy.

- Do not smoke.
- Eat a healthy diet. Eat foods low in fat, cholesterol, and sodium (salt).
- Exercise. Do activities you enjoy. Invite family or friends to join you. Just 30 minutes of exercise most days will help.
- Maintain a healthy weight. Extra weight increases your heart disease risk.
- Take all medicines the way your doctor tells you to.



Living With Heart Failure

More everyday life changes

Ask your doctor if you need to make these changes:

- Drink less water and other fluids.
- Keep track of daily weight.
- Drink less alcohol.
- Eat a special diet.

Talk to your doctor about ways to manage your heart condition. Make some everyday life changes. You'll feel better. You'll look better. And you'll enjoy life more.

Your Healthy Heart Checklist

See your doctor for a complete check-up. Be ready to discuss:

- Your medical history/Family medical history.** If heart disease runs in your family, you are more likely to have it.
- Any signs or symptoms.** Tell your doctor about any chest pain or pressure, unusual heartbeats, shortness of breath, weakness, or dizziness.
- All current medicines including over-the-counter medicines,** such as aspirin or vitamins.
- Diagnostic tests.** Your doctor may do blood tests, X-rays, and other tests to see how well your heart is working.
- Stress.** High levels of stress can affect your health.
- Everyday life changes to improve your health.** Ask your doctor for ways to plan a healthy diet and get more exercise.
- Menopause and hormone therapy.**