



Checklist for Managing Congestive Heart Failure

If you or a loved one have CHF, are you doing everything you can to manage the condition? Here is a checklist of things to consider:

Am I under regular medical care?

It's important that your physician monitor your heart health, medications and lifestyle. Keep all your appointments, and bring along any questions.

Do I take my medications as directed?

Medications for CHF can work only if taken correctly—the right amount, at the right time, and in the right way.

Do I restrict my sodium (salt) intake?

Sodium increases water retention, which puts extra strain on the heart. Your healthcare provider or dietitian can show you how to reduce sodium in your diet.

Do I avoid cholesterol and saturated fat?

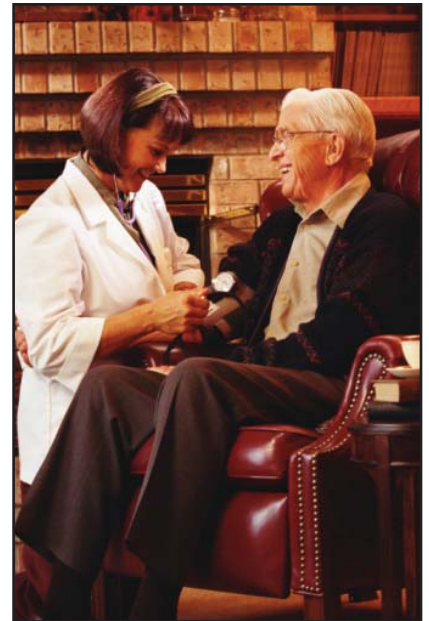
Cholesterol and saturated fat contribute to coronary artery disease, a major cause of heart failure. Follow your physician's recommendations for "heart smart" cooking, and read the labels on packaged products.

Am I a non-smoker?

Tobacco damages the blood vessels and puts extra strain on the heart. If you are a smoker, ask your healthcare provider about smoking cessation programs.

Do I drink alcohol sparingly or not at all?

Alcoholic beverages can weaken the heart, and may interact negatively with your medications. Ask about help if controlling your alcohol intake is a problem.



If you or a loved one has congestive heart failure, regular medical care and following the healthcare provider's instructions are important steps in managing the condition.

Do I limit my fluid intake?

Excess fluid puts strain on the heart. If you've been instructed to limit liquids, be sure to keep track of everything you drink.

Do I weigh myself every day?

A sudden increase in weight can be a sign of increased fluid retention. Report a gain of over three pounds in a day, or five pounds in a week. Be sure to weigh yourself at the same time each day.

Do I alert my healthcare provider if other symptoms worsen?

Call your doctor if you experience increased swelling of legs, feet, abdomen; increased shortness of breath; irregular heartbeat (“palpitations”); increased fatigue, dizziness or fainting.

Do I get enough—and the right kind of—exercise?

For most patients, regular exercise can help the heart pump more efficiently—but it's very important to follow an exercise program that is right for your case. Do not begin an exercise program without consulting your physician.

Do I get enough sleep—and make time for resting during the day?

Rest periods are recommended, to give the heart a chance to work more easily.

How's my stress level?

Stress and anxiety put strain on the heart. Develop relaxation strategies and eliminate stressful situations from your life.

Are my immunizations up to date?

Flu and pneumonia are especially dangerous for people with heart failure. Be sure you are immunized, and avoid persons with communicable diseases.

Lifestyle changes and following your healthcare provider's instructions can prevent worsening of your condition. But successful disease management doesn't just happen. It requires cooperation between patient and healthcare team. Family members and friends, too, can provide support and encouragement.

If you or your loved one is under a physician's care for CHF, talk about what you can do to successfully manage the condition.

Notes