

Living well with heart failure

Information to help you feel better



Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the heart failure team and patients at Eastern Health, Vic, and St Vincent's Health, Vic.

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This book is your guide to living with heart failure. It will help you and your family look after your heart.

Your nurse, doctor or health worker can help you fill out this book.

You may want a friend or family member to be with you.

Name: _____

I started this book on: _____

My nurse is: _____

Phone: _____

My health worker is _____

Phone: _____

My family doctor (GP) is: _____

Phone: _____

My heart doctor (cardiologist) is: _____

Phone: _____

My clinic is: _____ Phone: _____

My pharmacist is: _____ Phone: _____

Family and community helpers: _____

Name: _____ Phone _____

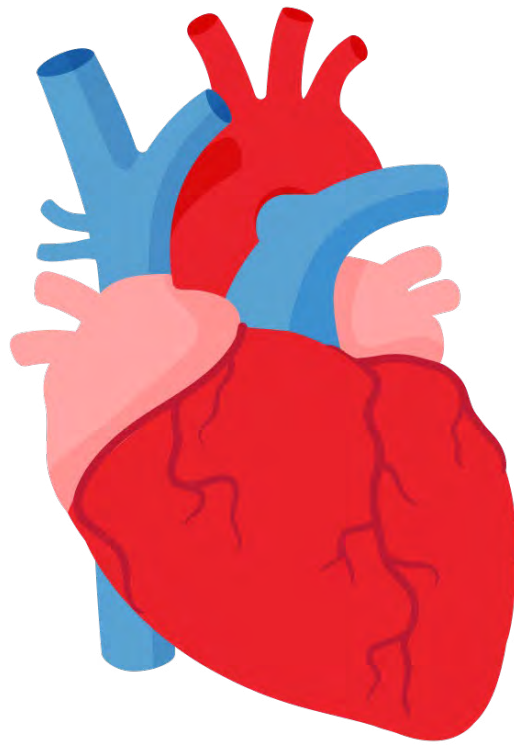
Name: _____ Phone: _____

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Many people do not just have heart failure. They may also have diabetes, kidney disease, lung problems, high blood pressure or other sicknesses.

All of these sicknesses affect each other and can be managed together.





Your heart is a muscle that pumps blood to every part of your body. When you have heart failure, your heart muscle can become bigger, weaker, or more stiff, and doesn't pump as well as it should.

By learning about heart failure and what to do, you can work with your doctor, nurse or health worker to help you feel better and do more of the things that are important to you.

About this book

This book is colour coded to help you easily find information that can help you manage your heart failure.

If you cannot understand something in this book, please talk to your nurse, doctor, health worker or the Heart Foundation Helpline (13 11 12). They are there to help you.

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What is heart failure?

Heart failure is when your heart gets damaged, becomes bigger, weaker, or more stiff, and doesn't pump as well as it should. This causes extra fluid to build up in your body and sometimes in your lungs.

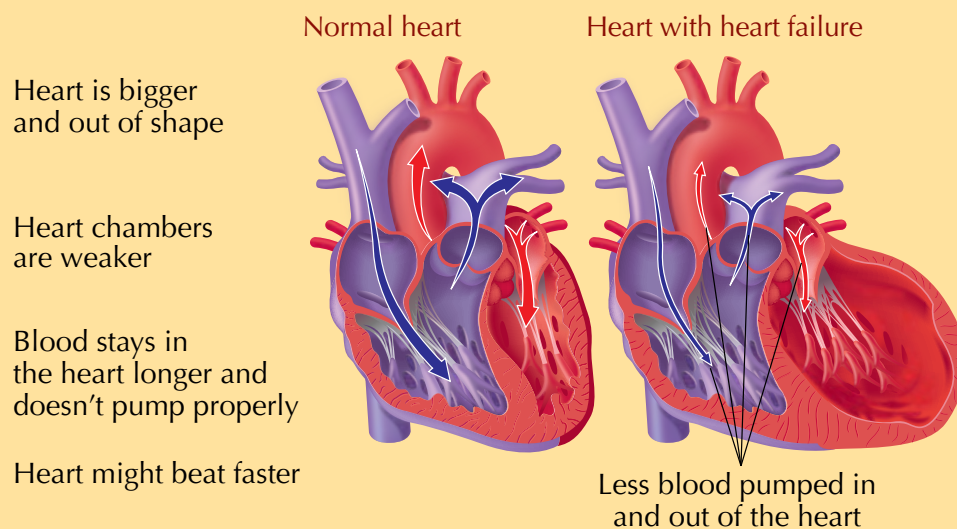
Lots of things can damage your heart including:

- heart attack
- high blood pressure
- too much fat in your blood (high cholesterol)
- too much alcohol
- too much sugar in your blood (diabetes)
- infections (virus)
- something you are born with
- some medicines (e.g. cancer therapies).

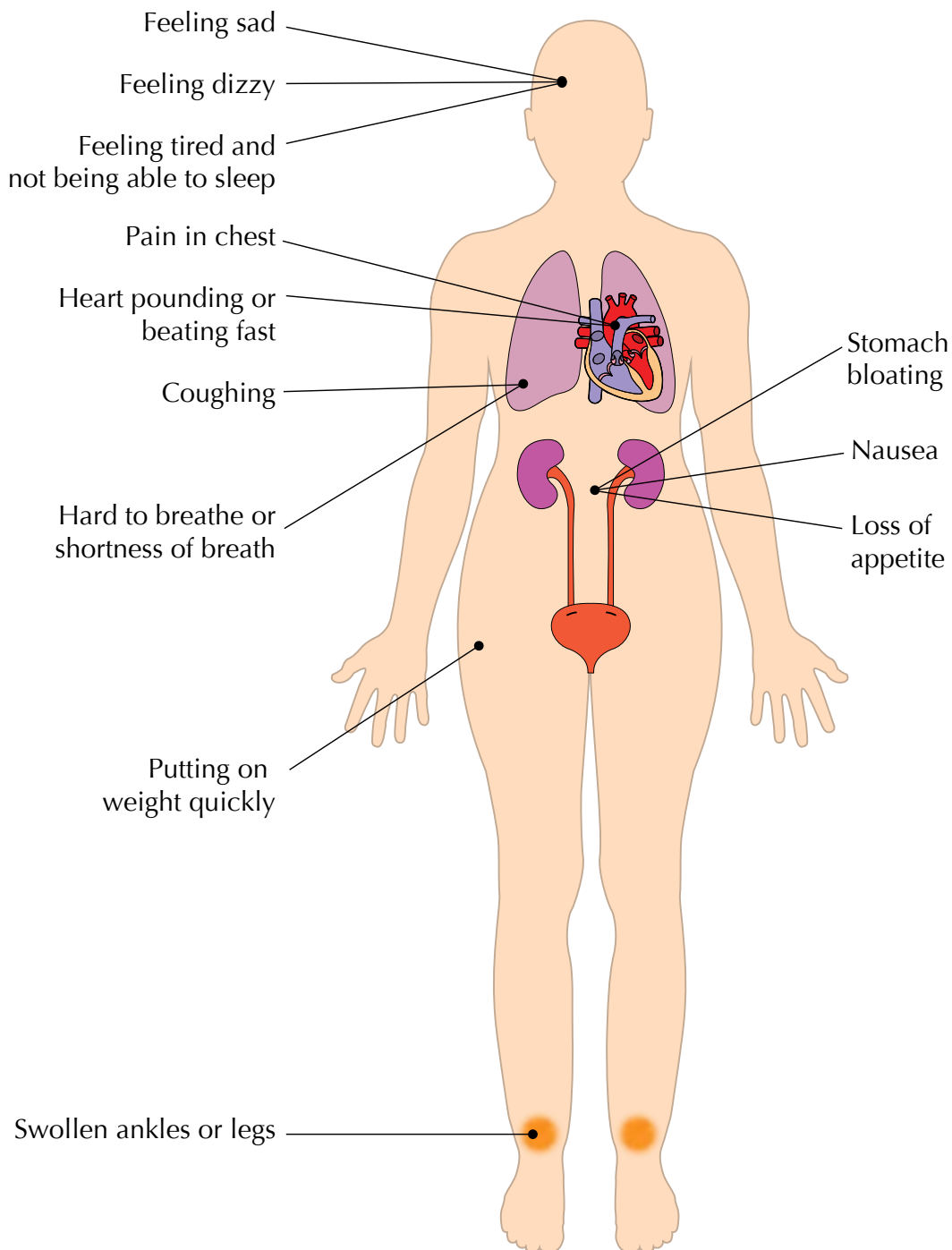
Heart failure is a serious problem and help from your nurse, doctor or health worker is important. Work with them to help improve your heart and health. You can't always make the heart strong like it used to be but you can help the heart to work better. This will make it easier to do things that are important to you.

Your doctor may ask you to have an echocardiogram (echo), a test that uses sound waves to create a moving picture of your heart. The echo shows the size and shape of your heart and how well it is pumping.

Example of a damaged heart with heart failure



How does heart failure make you feel?



Which of these things do you worry about or notice the most?



☐ Short of breath

Trouble breathing

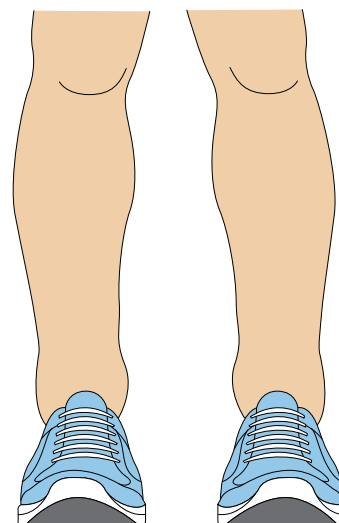
What can you do?

- Talk to your nurse, doctor or health worker if you are more breathless than usual or it is getting harder to do the things you usually do without getting out of breath.
- See the 'Shortness of breath' section on page 10.

☐ Swollen ankles, legs or stomach

What can you do?

- Measure how much fluid you drink each day (all fluid, not just water).
- Eat less salt.
- Weigh yourself every day.
- Take your fluid tablets.
- Talk to your nurse, doctor or health worker about how much fluid you should have in a day.
- See the 'Fluid' section on page 12 and the 'Salt' section on page 20.



☐ Pain in your chest

What can you do?

- If you get chest pain, stop, rest and take your anginine or nitrolingual spray.
- If the chest pain is really bad or gets worse, call Triple Zero (000) and ask for an ambulance. This is an emergency.
- See the section 'Warning signs of heart attack' on page 24.

☐ Heart pounding or going too fast (palpitations)

What can you do?

- Stop what you are doing and rest.
- Talk to your nurse, doctor or health worker if your heart is beating faster than usual. There are medicines that can help with this.



☐ Feeling tired

As your heart may not be pumping blood as strongly as it should, you may feel tired and not be able to do the things you usually do.

What can you do?

- Be physically active each day to help your heart get stronger. See the 'Physical activity section on page 25.
- Take rests when you need to.
- Ask for help if you need it.

☐ Feeling dizzy

Dizziness can be caused by low blood pressure and some medicines.

What can you do?

- Stop and rest.
- Stand up slowly when you have been sitting or lying down.
- If it keeps happening, talk to your nurse, doctor or health worker about how you are feeling. They can help you.





☐ Feeling sad or worried

You are not alone. Many people can feel sad or worried about being sick and not being able to do the things they used to do. If you have these feelings for two weeks or more, it could be depression.

What can you do?

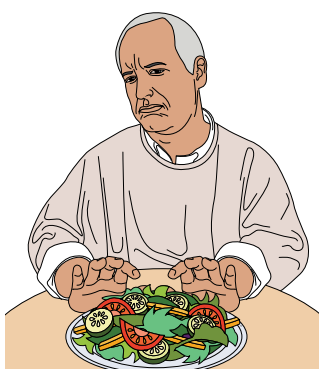
- Talk to someone about how you are feeling – don't keep it to yourself.
- Your doctor, nurse or health worker can help you feel better or get you the help you need. Talk to them about it.

☐ Coughing

You may cough more at night because there is too much fluid in your lungs.

What can you do?

- Take your fluid tablets.
- If you are coughing more often or have a new cough, talk to your nurse, doctor or health worker.



☐ Not hungry

If you are not hungry, you may have too much fluid in your stomach or you may not be going to the toilet enough (constipated).

What can you do?

- Eat smaller meals more often.
- Have snacks during the day.
- Eat foods you like and enjoy.
- Talk to your nurse, doctor or health worker.

☐ Not going to the toilet often enough (constipation)

What can you do?

- Be physically active and move around more.
- Drink fluids but no more than your doctor has recommended. (remember to measure how much you drink, see page 14).
- Eat more fruit and vegetables.
- Talk to your nurse, doctor or health worker because sometimes medicine can help.



Which of these things do you worry about or notice the most?



What should I do when I feel sick?



There are a number of signs that will let you know when you need help managing your heart failure. In this book, they are called 'Take Action' signs. These are also called 'symptoms'. When symptoms or 'Take Action' signs worsen, you need to talk to your nurse, doctor or health worker so they can help you.

Shortness of breath

You can get short of breath from heart failure, lung disease, smoking and asthma. In heart failure, being short of breath is often the first thing you notice. It is caused by fluid in the lungs. This fluid can also make you cough and wake up at night.



Sleep

Do you need to sit up higher to sleep? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Do you sleep all night? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Can you lie flat to sleep? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Does shortness of breath or coughing wake you up?
☐ Yes ☐ No

Walking

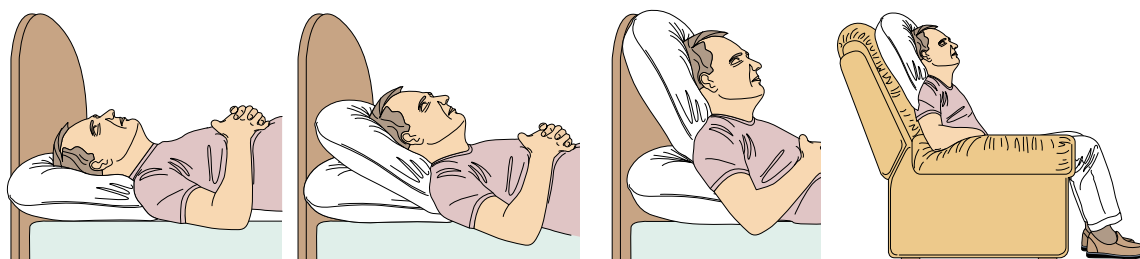
Can you walk as far? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Do you get short of breath when you walk? ☐ Yes ☐ No

When I feel well, I can walk to: _____

When I feel sick, I can only walk to: _____

When I get short of breath, I can't do things like:



Good

Bad

Heart failure can make you feel short of breath when you are lying down. When it gets really bad, you may need to sit up to sleep. You must go to see your doctor, nurse or health worker within 24 hours if you have to use extra pillows or sit up at night to sleep.

Take
Action

**Important 'Take Action'
signs are:**

- ◆ can't lie down to sleep
- ◆ need to sit up more at night using extra pillows
- ◆ more breathless
- ◆ new cough
- ◆ chest pain
- ◆ not able to walk to

◆ other:



New cough



Feeling breathless

Fluid

When you have heart failure, your heart doesn't pump properly and you get more fluid in your body. This can make you weigh more or make your ankles, legs or other parts of your body swell up. It is important to know when fluid in your body is building up so you can do something early.

What you can do

Write down your weight every day and look for changes, up or down. Using a diary or calendar may help.

- Weigh yourself every day. The best time to do this is in the morning after you go to the toilet, but before you get dressed and eat breakfast.
- Know what your 'good' or 'healthy' weight is.
- If you put on weight quickly, more than 2 kg in two days, call your doctor, nurse or health worker.



How much do you weigh when you feel well?

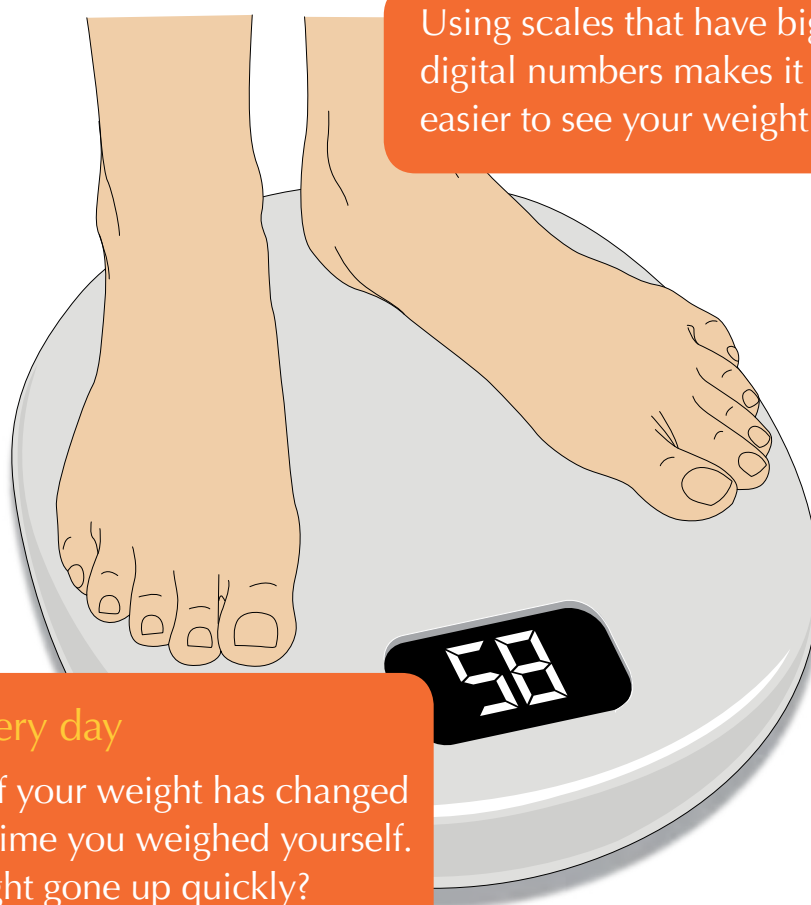
(This is called dry weight.)

_____ kg

How much do you weigh when you don't feel well?

_____ kg

How do you know when you have extra fluid in your body (signs)?



Weigh in every day

Check to see if your weight has changed since the last time you weighed yourself. Has your weight gone up quickly?

Take Action

Important 'Take Action' signs are:

- ◆ putting on weight quickly – more than 2 kgs in two days
- ◆ your belt or pants get tight
- ◆ swollen ankles, stomach or legs
- ◆ your shoes and socks get tight
- ◆ loss of appetite
- ◆ other: _____

To manage your fluid, you should:

- talk to your nurse, doctor or health worker about how much fluid you can have
- measure how much fluid you can have each day (usually about 1,000–1,500 mL, or 1–1½ litres a day, but talk to your doctor about what is right for you)
- try not to have more than your daily allowance
- remember to count the fluid you have in other food and drinks.

You might need more when it is very hot – check with your nurse, doctor or health worker.

How to measure fluids

- Measure how much your usual cup or glass holds and keep a record of how many you drink.
- You must use the same cup for each drink.

OR

- Fill a jug with your allowance each morning and drink from this during the day – allow water for taking your medicines.

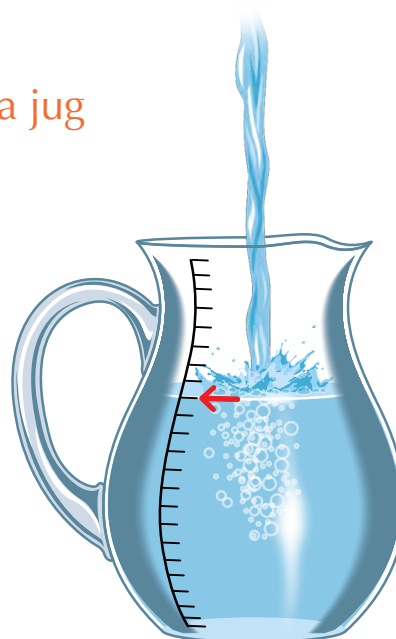
If you get thirsty, you can:

- chew sugarless gum
- suck on a small amount of ice – remember to count this in your daily fluid
- try to stay cool on hot days
- avoid salty foods
- avoid lots of sugar
- fill a small spray bottle with water and spray the inside of your mouth – remember to count this in your daily fluid.

How to manage your fluid intake using a jug

Mark on your jug to show you what your fluid limit is. Fill up the jug to the mark every morning and use this water for your kettle as well.

When the jug is empty, you will know that you have reached your limit for the day.



How to manage your fluid intake using a cup



My usual cup = _____ mL

I can have _____ cups to drink each day.

Remember to use the same cup for all drinks.

What do I count as fluids or drinks?

Drinks that come in a can, bottle or carton will have the amount of fluid written on the label (e.g. a can of soft drink is 375 mL). Remember, fluid is more than just water (drinks). All of the things below count as fluid.



Water



Juice



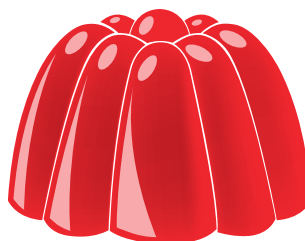
Soups



Ice-cream



Tea and coffee



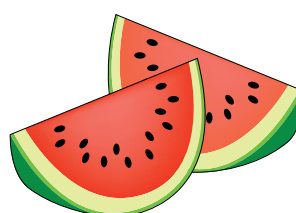
Jelly



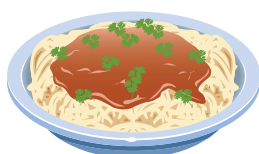
Milk or
flavoured milk



Alcohol



Fruit with lots of water
(e.g. watermelon)



Pasta



Yoghurt



Soft drinks



Ice



Custard

What is the fluid content of foods?

1 tablespoon = 20 mL

1 metric cup = 250 mL (8oz)

1 litre = 1000 mL = 1 kg in fluid weight

1 ice cube = 15 mL

Note: Use measuring cups and jugs to accurately measure your fluid intake.

Fluid content of some common foods and drinks	Volume
Cup of tea or coffee	250 mL
½ cup jelly or custard	100 mL
200 g tub yoghurt	160 mL
2 scoops of ice cream	40 mL
1 cup cooked porridge	160 mL
1 cup cooked rice or pasta	100 mL
1 piece of fruit (apple)	80 mL
½ cup melon	100 mL
2 tablespoons gravy/sauce	40 mL
Bowl of soup	400 mL

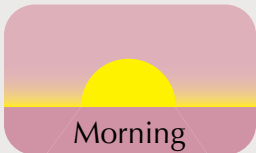

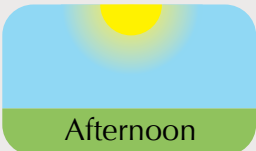

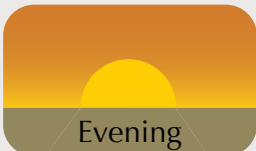

Coffee and cola may cause high blood pressure and can make your heart race and not pump properly, so:

- don't have more than two drinks with caffeine in a day
- have decaf coffee or herbal tea
- remember to count all these drinks in your daily fluid total.

Alcohol can cause more damage to your heart. If you drink alcohol, talk to your nurse, doctor or health worker about how much you can have.

My fluid plan

Talk to your nurse, doctor or health worker about what you have been drinking and work out a plan.

Time	What I can have
 Morning	
 Morning tea	
 Afternoon	
 Afternoon tea	
 Evening	
 Bedtime	

Date: _____

	How much
	mL
	mL
	mL
	mL
	mL
	mL
Total	mL

Salt



Salt is sometimes called 'sodium'. Salt holds fluid in your body and can make you feel sick.

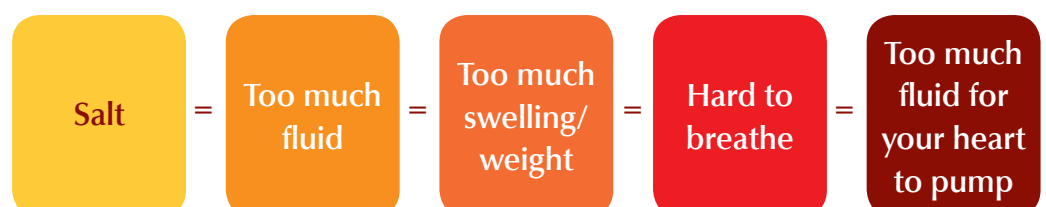
A healthy salt intake is less than one teaspoon per day.

It is not just the salt that you add to your food that you need to be careful of. Hidden salt in some of the foods you eat can be a real problem.

Some salty foods include:

- processed meat, such as ham, bacon, sausages, hot dogs, tinned meat, corned meat and pies
- takeaway foods, such as hamburgers, pizza, hot chips, noodles, potato chips, many Asian foods, pasta and fried food
- other foods, such as tinned and instant soup, packet seasoning, stock cubes, soy sauce, instant noodles, sports drinks, soda water, salted nuts, fish in brine, tomato sauce, pickles, olives and dips.

Some bread and breakfast cereals can contain a lot of salt, so be careful which one you choose.





Salty foods that I should cut down are:

A series of horizontal lines for writing, intended for listing salty foods to be reduced.

How to read a food label

NUTRITION INFORMATION		
Servings per package: 8		
Serving size: 33g		
	Per Serving	Per 100g
Energy	550kj	1680kj
Protein	2.4g	7.2g
Fat		
Total	3.6g	11.0g
Saturated	1.3g	4.1g
Carbohydrate		
Total	21.5g	55.1g
Sugars	10.1g	30.7g
Dietary Fibre	1.7g	5.1g
Sodium	20mg	70mg

1. Look at the nutrients per 100 g.

2. Look at the salt level (sodium).

3. Choose foods with low salt (sodium). Less than 400 mg per 100 g is good. Less than 120 mg per 100 g is best.

This food has 70 mg of sodium per 100 g.

This food is a good choice with a serving having only 20 mg of salt.

Overall you should be having no more than 5 grams of salt (2,000 mg sodium) per day, which is less than a teaspoon.

Good heart food

Fruit, vegetables and lean meats are healthy foods and do not usually contain very much salt. Lemon juice, garlic, herbs and spices can all be used to make food more tasty without adding extra salt.

Cooking your own food at home is better than getting takeaway because you can control how much salt goes into it.



Good foods that I like are:



Warning signs of heart attack



Physical activity

Regular physical activity will help your heart get stronger and make you less tired. Before you start, talk to your nurse, doctor or health worker about a physical activity plan to suit you.

There are lots of ways to be active.

Move more, sit less



Walking is a good way to be active. When you walk, you should be breathing slightly faster but still able to talk.

- Walk outside, around your home or around the shops.
- Join a walking group, such as Heart Foundation Walking.
- Take your dog for a walk.
- Take the train or bus instead of driving your car everywhere.



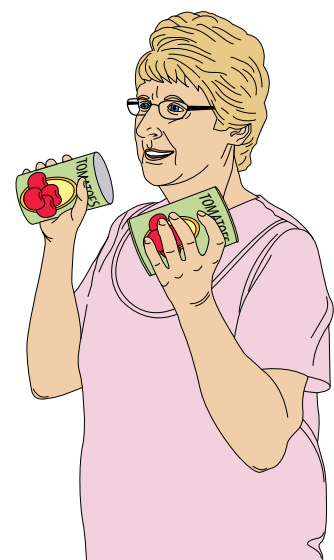
Jim walks to see his family around the corner each day. When Jim is well, he can easily walk the 15 minutes there and back from his family. When he can't manage the walk, he knows it is time to go to the clinic and talk to the nurse, doctor or health worker.

Strength exercises

- Arm exercises are good. You can lift light weights such as cans of tinned food or a packet of rice to build your strength.



Jenny finds carrying the clothes basket out each day is good arm exercise for her.



Joyce uses tinned tomatoes as hand weights to exercise her arms.

Other light physical activity

- Mowing the lawns or doing gardening is good activity.
- Using an exercise bike is good. It is also a good way to keep moving when it is too cold or hot to go outside.



Cardiac rehab and heart failure management programs

You should ask your doctor, nurse or health worker about going to a cardiac rehab program or specialised heart failure management program. These programs are for people who have heart trouble. Physical activity is good for everyone and in these programs, staff can support and guide you to build up your confidence and also give you tips for healthy eating and taking your medicines.

You will meet other people with heart failure and can share ideas and support each other.

How to start

- Plan your physical activity with your nurse, doctor or health worker.
- Start slowly and try to do a bit more each time. You will notice that it will get easier and you will be able to do more.
- Do not strain with heavy weights.
- Do not exercise in extreme temperatures outside when it is too hot or too cold.
- Avoid things that are too hard or make you feel very out of breath or very tired and sick.
- Stop exercising if you get pain in your chest or it gets hard to breathe.



What physical activities do you like to do?

How often are you active?

What is a good arm exercise for you?

What things could you do for activity each day?

Heart Foundation *Walking* Heart Foundation®



There's a simple way to reduce stress, be more alert, build a healthier body and stronger relationships. It's walking. And everything you need to get started is only 2 feet away.

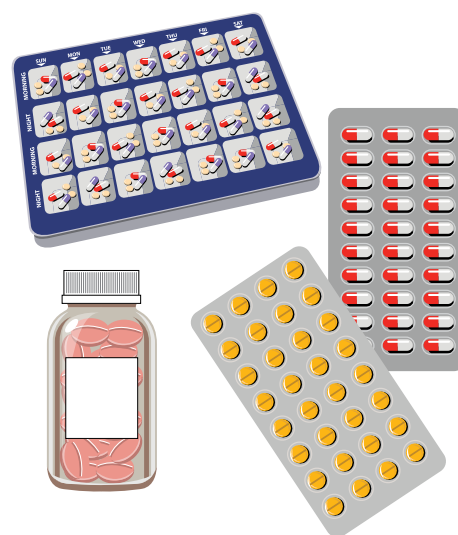
Visit walking.heartfoundation.org.au to join a **free** walking group or download the Heart Foundation Walking app to walk solo. Call **13 11 12** for more information.

Supported by the Australian Government and the Queensland Government

Medicines

It is very important to take your medicines as prescribed.

- Take your medicines every day.
- Most people with heart failure need more than one medicine and it is important to take them all.
- Don't share or take other people's medicines, because they might not be right for you.
- Don't run out of medicine.
- Make sure you have enough medicine to last if you are going away.
- Some medicines don't mix well together. Don't start any new medicines from the chemist or supermarket before you speak to your doctor, nurse or health worker.
- The amount of medicine you need for your heart may change. Medicines for heart failure are often started at a low dose and then the doctor will adjust them to suit you.
- Keep a list of your medicines and take it with you when you visit your health worker, nurse, doctor or hospital.
- Keep your medicine list up to date. You can use the 'My medicines' record on page 38.



Most people have no problems with their medicines but sometimes medicines can make you:

- dizzy or light-headed
- feel worse
- itchy or give you a rash
- cough.

Some medicines or supplements are bad for your heart when you have heart failure. Always check with your nurse, health worker, doctor or pharmacist before you take:

- anti-inflammatory pain killers e.g. Nurofen®, ibuprofen
- cough or cold and flu medicines
- herbal or vitamin products or supplements
- weight loss products or supplements



If you have a problem with your medicines, talk to your:

- ◆ nurse
- ◆ health worker
- ◆ doctor
- ◆ pharmacist.

Your heart failure medicines

Your doctor may give you a lot of different medicines to take for your heart failure. Medicines do not cure heart failure but they can help you feel better, live longer, stay out of hospital and have more energy so you can enjoy life. Each medicine works in a different way to help your heart. Medicines for heart failure belong to the groups described on the next page.



ACE inhibitor (ACEI) or angiotensin receptor blockers (ARB) or angiotensin receptor-neprilysin inhibitor (ARNI)

help lower stress hormones and make it easier for your heart to pump and reduce fluid build-up in your body.

My medicine from this group: _____

Beta-blockers

help your heart work better by pumping slower and stronger.

My medicine from this group: _____

Aldosterone blockers (mineralocorticoid receptor blockers)

help to get rid of extra fluid from your body and make it easier for your heart to work as it should.

My medicine from this group: _____

Diuretics

help get rid of extra fluid from your body, including your lungs, feet, legs and around your middle.

My medicine from this group: _____

Other

Other heart failure medicines I take:

Other medicines or supplements I take:

It is very important that you take all your heart failure medicines and follow the instructions carefully.

Do not stop taking your heart failure medicines without discussing with your doctor. Carry an up-to-date medicines list with you.

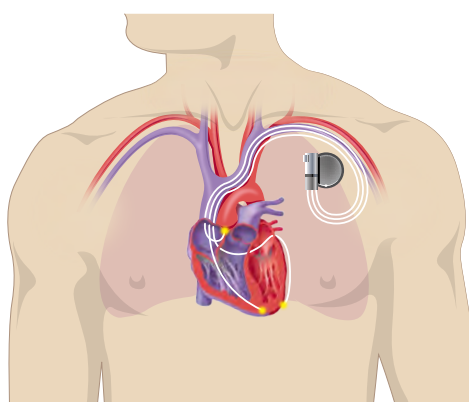
See page 44 to write out your medicines and when and how to take them.

Heart devices

Pacemakers

Heart failure can lead to heart muscle problems that cause electrical signals to travel too slowly through your heart. This means your heart will not squeeze and release properly, making it a less effective pump.

If you have this problem your doctor may recommend that you have a special kind of pacemaker put in to help you feel better. The most common is called a biventricular pacemaker, which is designed to help the lower chambers of your heart (ventricles) work better. It keeps the right and the left ventricles pumping together by sending small electrical impulses through the leads. These pacemakers can help with some of the symptoms you feel such as being short of breath and having fluid build-up.



The lead tip attaches to the heart muscle, while the other end of the lead (attached to the pulse generator) is placed in a pocket created under the skin in your chest.

You will need regular check-ups to make sure your pacemaker is working properly and helping your heart to be a better pump. The electrical impulses from the pacemaker can be adjusted and changed if needed, just like you tune a radio.

Implantable defibrillators

Implantable defibrillators (ICD) are for patients with an abnormal rhythm in the lower heart chambers. Among other things, an ICD can sense when the heart rhythm is not right and use a small, electrical shock to reset your heart and return the rhythm to normal. Your doctor will discuss with you whether you need an ICD.

Things you can do to feel better

Don't have too much fluid

- Know how much fluid or drink you can have each day.
- Don't eat too much salt. Don't forget the salt that is hidden in some foods such as bread.

Drink less alcohol

- Alcohol can cause more damage to your heart. If you drink alcohol, talk to your nurse, doctor or health worker about cutting down your alcohol.

Keep healthy

- Weigh yourself every morning.
- Ask your nurse, doctor or health worker whether you need to lose weight.
- Do some physical activity every day.
- Eat fresh healthy food.
- Don't smoke or be around people who smoke.
- Look after your diabetes (sugar) and other health problems.

Immunisation

- Have a flu vaccine every year.
- Talk to your doctor, nurse or health worker about keeping your pneumococcal vaccine up to date.

Medicines

- Take your medicines as prescribed.
- If you have a problem with your medicine, talk to your health worker, nurse, doctor or pharmacist.

Remember

- Keep your doctor's appointment.
- Call your doctor, nurse or health worker when you don't feel well.
- Talk to your family or carer about your heart failure.

Take Action

Important 'Take Action' signs are:

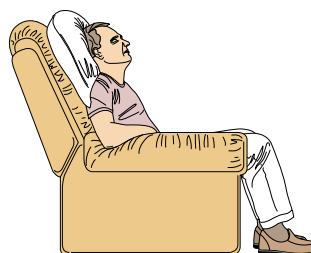
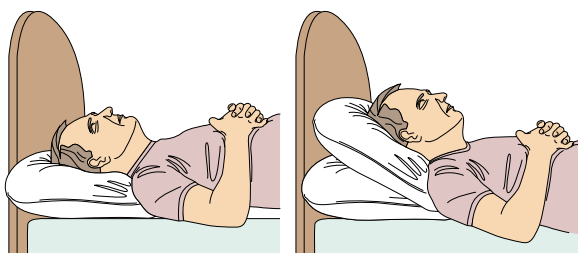
- ◆ can't lay down to sleep
- ◆ coughing at night
- ◆ being short of breath
- ◆ swelling, e.g. tight clothes, tight shoes, swollen stomach, puffy ankles and weight gain
- ◆ chest pain
- ◆ heart beating fast or racing (palpitations)
- ◆ feeling more sick than usual
- ◆ new symptoms develop.



Coughing at night



Swollen stomach



Good

Bad

Can't lie down to sleep

My health record

Date	Weight (kg)	Waist (cm)	Blood pressure	HbA1c

My clinic and doctor visits

Date/time	Where	With

My medicines

Time	Medicine name	Brand name
 <p>Morning</p>		
 <p>Afternoon</p>		
 <p>Evening</p>		
 <p>Bedtime</p>		
When needed		

Date: _____

Strength	How do I take it?	What is it for?



**Heart Foundation
HELPLINE
13 11 12**

**Free heart health information and support
is a phone call away.**

heartfoundation.org.au/support

The Heart Foundation Helpline provides free information on heart health, nutrition and a healthy lifestyle.

Call **13 11 12** during business hours,
email **health@heartfoundation.org.au** or
visit **heartfoundation.org.au/support**



If you need an interpreter, call the Translating and Interpreting Service on 131 450 and ask for the Heart Foundation.



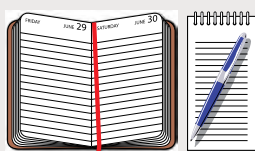
Things to do every day



Only drink _____ litres.
That is about _____ cups.
Don't forget tea, coffee, soups and fruit all count.



Weigh yourself every day.



Write down your weight.
Is it changing much? Up or down?



Eat fewer salty foods and do not add salt to your food.



Try to be active every day.
Do what you can on days when you feel well.
Be active at a comfortable pace,
don't get too out of breath.



Remember to take your medicines as prescribed.



Remember to do things that make you happy.
What hobbies do you have? Fishing, gardening, dancing, reading? Or is it time to find something new to do?



Call your doctor, nurse or health worker within 24 hours if you have any of these symptoms



Ankles, legs or stomach swelling
Your shoes, socks or pants are getting very tight



Weight goes up or down by 2 kg in two days



Bad cough, especially at night
A new cough that won't go away



Your breathing is getting harder
You can only walk _____
You have to sit up to sleep



You feel dizzy or feel like fainting



Heart is racing and won't slow down (palpitations)

Other: _____



Emergency

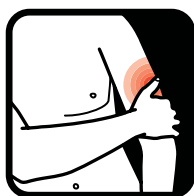


Call Triple Zero 000 and ask for an ambulance if you have any of these warning signs of heart attack.

Pain, pressure, heaviness or tightness in your chest, arm(s), back, jaw, neck, shoulder(s).



Chest



Arm(s)



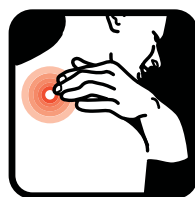
Back



Jaw



Neck



Shoulder(s)



You collapse or black out

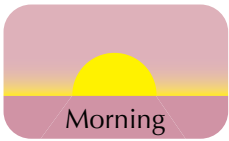


It is very hard to breathe
or you can't breathe



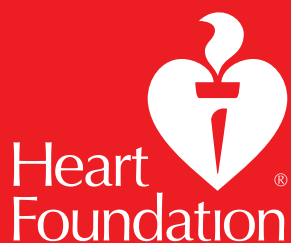
My medicines

Date: _____

Time	Medicine name	Strength	How do I take it?
 Morning			
 Afternoon			
 Evening			
 Bedtime			
When needed			

Notes

[illegible]



For heart health information
13 11 12
www.heartfoundation.org.au

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