

Living with heart failure

A healthy lifestyle is important for all of us to live as full a life as possible and this is the same for anyone living with heart failure. Improving heart failure self-care lowers the risk that you will need hospital stays for heart failure, saves lives and improves quality of life.

You should follow the lifestyle and self-care recommendations suggested by your care team. These recommendations are an important part of your treatment.

KEEP WATCH ON YOUR SYMPTOMS and keeping a diary may help, report them to your care team during appointments. You should contact your doctor or go to hospital if your condition worsens.



KEEPING ACTIVE boosts energy, improves sleep and quality of life. Your care team can tell you about the type and level of activity that is safe for your particular case. People with heart failure should not start an exercise programme without speaking to their care team.

KEEPING TO A HEALTHY WEIGHT AND DIET boosts your overall health and limits the strain on your heart. Do not eat a lot of salt, because too much sodium, for example, table salt, can cause fluid to build up in your body. For those with severe heart failure, your care team may suggest to limit your fluid intake.



LIMITING YOUR ALCOHOL INTAKE reduces the chance of irregular heartbeats, high blood pressure, stroke, liver problems and some cancers.

QUIT SMOKING, USING OTHER TOBACCO PRODUCTS AND AVOID DRUGS OF ABUSE such as

methamphetamine, cannabis and cocaine. This will reduce your risk of worsening heart failure and other heart and circulatory diseases. If you find this difficult, your care team can put you in touch with specialist services to help you quit.



WEIGH YOURSELF REGULARLY, even every day. Sudden weight gain may mean fluid is building up in your body. If you gain more than 1-1.5 kg (2-3lb) in 24 hours or 2.25 kg (5 pound) in a week, contact your care team as soon as possible.

VACCINATION AGAINST COVID-19, INFLUENZA AND PNEUMONIA reduces the risk of heart disease. Flu jabs, for example, reduce the risk of major adverse cardiovascular events such as a heart attack (myocardial infarction), stroke and even death.



DEPRESSION MAKES IT HARDER TO LOOK AFTER YOURSELF. Speak to your care team if you, or your caregiver, feel anxious, depressed or feel that you cannot cope. Mindfulness improves anxiety symptoms and quality of life.

DON'T BE ISOLATED. Social isolation seems to increase mortality in people with heart failure. So make the effort and reach out to other people. As heart failure is common, there are likely to be many people nearby who also live with heart failure.

TAKE YOUR MEDICINES AS RECOMMENDED. The most effective drugs will not work unless you take them as prescribed. Unfortunately, it is easy to forget. You should leave the medicine where you can see it, such as on the breakfast table and you could also set an alarm as a reminder, for example, on your phone.



ATTEND YOUR APPOINTMENTS. Follow your care team's recommendations and always attend your appointments, whether these are in a clinic, in your home, on the telephone or over the internet. You may also be asked to check and record some measurements, such as your blood pressure, and send these to your care team.

