

Living Positively with Heart Failure



Heart Failure Society
of South Africa



Dr Sandra Pretorius-Koen, Registered Dietician

Dr Martin Mpe, Cardiologist

Dr Tony Lachman, Cardiologist

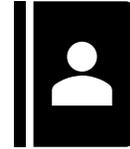
info@heffsa.org

www.heffsa.org

Contents



- 1. MY Treatment Plan**
- 2. What is heart failure (CHF)?**
- 3. How your heart works**
- 4. Symptoms of heart failure**
- 5. Causes of heart failure**
- 6. How to take care of yourself**
 - Managing your medicines**
 - Medicines for heart failure**
 - Nutritional Plan**
 - Reading food labels**
 - Limiting fluids**
 - Exercise**
 - Mindfulness and stress**
 - Avoiding colds and flu**
 - Stop smoking**
 - Heart Failure Dairy**
 - Healthy Heart Recipes**
 - Healthy Heart Shopping list**
 - Important telephone numbers**



1. Diet:

_____ grams sodium per day
_____ cups of fluid per day (_____ ml/d)

Avoid alcohol

2. Weigh yourself each day at the same time, on the same scale, wearing approximately the same amount of clothing. If you gain 1 – 2 kg in 3 days, call your doctor.

3. Activity:

Avoid extreme temperatures. Avoid heavy lifting.

4. Symptoms:

Call your doctor or nurse if you have new onset or an increase in any of these:

- Chest pain / pressure
- Shortness of breath
- Dizziness / fainting
- Constant cough
- 1 – 2 kg weight gain in 3 days
- Swelling of feet and/or hands
- Pain in abdomen or bloating
- Bleeding or bruising easily

What is Heart Failure

- Heart Failure is a condition in which the heart muscle has become weaker than normal.
- This usually occurs gradually over a period of time.
- The heart is unable to pump enough blood and oxygen to meet the body's needs.
- When this happens, blood that should be pumped out of the heart backs up in the lungs and other parts of the body. Therefore, many people with heart failure have shortness of breath or swelling in the extremities. So, you may hear heart failure called CHF (congestive heart failure).
- As the heart strains to do its work, the heart muscle fibers stretch, and the chambers of the heart enlarge. This further weakens the heart's ability to perform.

How Your Heart Works

- The heart is divided into four chambers or sections called the right and left atrium and the right and left ventricle.
- These chambers are separated by valves. Valves allow the blood to move from chamber to chamber without backing up.
- The right upper and lower chambers supply blood to the lungs.
- The left upper and lower chambers supply oxygen-rich blood to the tissue in the body.
- With each heartbeat, a normal left ventricle pumps out or “ejects” 55-60% of the blood it receives.
- This is known as the “ejection fraction”. In heart failure, the heart pumps less blood with each beat, so the “ejection fraction” goes down.
- Because the tissues are receiving less blood and oxygen, they are unable to perform their functions properly. Activities such as walking, climbing stairs and carrying objects become more difficult.
- Heart failure, or pumping weakness, can start in the right or left chamber.



Symptoms of Heart Failure

- ♥ The following symptoms are commonly associated with heart failure:
 - ✓ Shortness of breath (may be all the time, with exertion or at night when lying down)
 - ✓ Exercise intolerance
 - ✓ Difficulty lying flat without extra pillows
 - ✓ Increasing fatigue
 - ✓ Swelling in the legs
 - ✓ Rapid weight gain
 - ✓ Abdominal distention and bloating
 - ✓ Decreased appetite

- ♥ Most of these symptoms are caused by excess fluid build-up. In heart failure, the body has difficulty getting rid of salt and water.
- ♥ The fluid builds up in the tissues of the body in the legs, abdomen, and lungs.
- ♥ The heart has to work harder to pump this extra fluid and this causes more fatigue.
- ♥ It is important to communicate any new or increasing symptoms to your doctor. Many times, these symptoms can be treated with simple medications and diet adjustments before they are allowed to develop into a more serious situation.



Causes of Heart Failure

♥ Causes of heart failure include:

1. Hypertension (high blood pressure)
2. Coronary artery disease
3. Defective heart valves
4. Viral illness
5. Illicit drugs such as cocaine
6. Alcohol abuse
7. Idiopathic (unknown cause)

♥ Heart failure is generally not curable, but it can be treated effectively, and most people will feel better once therapy is started.

♥ Correcting problems such as high blood pressure, blocked arteries, and diseased valves will help.

♥ Stopping drugs, alcohol, or cigarettes may help to stop the progression of the disease.

♥ Therapy is aimed at helping the heart to work more efficiently and with less effort.

♥ A combination of medication, diet, and exercise is an effective course of treatment.

How to take care of yourself: An overview

♥ In most cases, heart failure is a chronic condition. There is no easy cure. However, there are several ways that you can take an active role in your health.

♥ It is important that you feel comfortable enough with your health care team to discuss any questions or concerns that you may have.

♥ Never hesitate to notify your healthy care team if you are unclear on some aspect of your health care plan or feel that something just isn't quite right with how you

feel.



Your health care team would always rather hear from you if something were wrong, rather than having you end up in the hospital.

✓ **Medicine**

- Take your medicine exactly as they are prescribed. If you are having problems following the medicine schedule, or if you think you are having side effects, be sure to tell your doctor or nurse.
- Bring your medicines or a copy of your medicine list with you to each visit.
- Call the doctor's office if you are running low on medicine.
- Refills can be called in to your pharmacy.
- If you use an online order service, be sure to order early so you do not run out of medicine.
- Be sure to tell your doctor or nurse if you are having problems paying for your medicines. They may be able to direct you to places where you can get help.

✓ **Daily Weights**

- It is very important that you weigh yourself each morning.
- Weigh yourself wearing approximately the same amount of clothing each time.
- Keep track of your weight on a chart.
- Call your doctor or nurse if you gain 1-2 kg in 3 days. This could mean that you are retaining fluid.



✓ **Fluid Restriction**

- You should limit your total fluid intake to 1-2 liters per day. This is to help keep your body from retaining fluid.

✓ **Sodium Restriction**

- You should restrict your total daily sodium (salt) intake according to your treatment plan. This helps to prevent your body from retaining fluid.

✓ **Exercise**

- It is important to exercise as prescribed by your doctor or health care team. Light to moderate intensity exercise, such as walking, and biking are just some examples of exercise that you may perform.

The following pages will give you more detailed information on medications and making lifestyle changes with your diet and exercise regime. Take charge and learn more taking care of your health



Managing Your Medicines

Helpful Hints

Heart Failure is a serious disease. By being informed about your medicines, you can take an active part in your treatment. The following are helpful hints about your medicines:

- ✓ Know the names of your medicines.
- ✓ Know what your medicines are used for.
- ✓ Know the dosage of each medicine and how often you should take it.
- ✓ Take your medicine as prescribed by your doctor.
- ✓ Never change or stop taking your medicine without talking to your doctor.
- ✓ Keep a list of your medicines at home and in your wallet.
- ✓ Take your medicine bottles or a copy of your medicine list to your doctor's visit.
- ✓ Take your medicine with another daily activity you do at the same time of day, such as brushing your teeth.
- ✓ Know what to do if you miss a dose.
- ✓ Never take someone else's medicine.
- ✓ Don't take over the counter medicine without checking first with your doctor or nurse.
- ✓ Notify your doctor or nurse of any changes that have been made with your medicines.

Medicines for Heart Failure

There are many medicines to help heart failure. Some can help decrease progression of heart failure, while others can help decrease symptoms. The different medications can help you to feel better. Of course, the more medications you take, the easier it is to make a mistake (such as missing a dose). Forgetting medications is one of the most common reasons people are hospitalized for heart failure. The best results are seen when patients understand what medicines they are taking and why.

Common medications and what they do¹³

ACE INHIBITORS AND ANGIOTENSIN II BLOCKERS (e.g: Perndopril)

Lower the blood pressure by relaxing the arteries, reducing the workload of the heart and increasing blood flow to the kidneys. They also block some of the body's harmful responses to heart failure.

DIURETICS (WATER PILLS) (e.g: Frusemide)

Remove extra fluid from the body; lessen swelling of the ankles and abdomen (edema) and make breathing easier.

POTASSIUM OR MAGNESIUM (e.g: Slow K)

Replace potassium or magnesium which can be lost due to increased urination when taking certain diuretics.

BETA-BLOCKERS (e.g: Carvedilol)

Block over-stimulation of the heart by adrenaline which occurs in people with heart failure and allows the heart to work more easily.

VASODILATORS (e.g: Isordil, Hydralazine)

Similar to ACE inhibitors, lower the blood pressure by relaxing the arteries and reduce the work of the heart.

INOTROPIC AGENTS (e.g: Digoxin)

Improve the heart's pumping ability and regulate the heart's rate and rhythm.

ANTIARRHYTHMICS (e.g: Amiodarone)

Control abnormal heart rhythm.



How is heart failure treated?

HEART FAILURE IS TREATED BY:

- MAKING LIFESTYLE CHANGES
 - TAKING MEDICATION
- SEEING YOUR FAMILY DOCTOR FOR REGULAR CHECK UPS
 - SURGERY IF APPROPRIATE

TREATMENT AIMS TO:

- Prevent progression of your heart problem.
- Maintain or improve your quality of life.
- Help you live longer.

TREATMENT: A TEAM EFFORT

The success of your treatment plan will require team effort. Your family doctor and your specialist cardiologist will manage your medication and other medical problems. Other team members – nurses, dieticians, physiotherapists and social workers – will help you achieve success. It is up to you to take your medication, live a healthy lifestyle, keep your follow-up appointments and be an active member of the team.

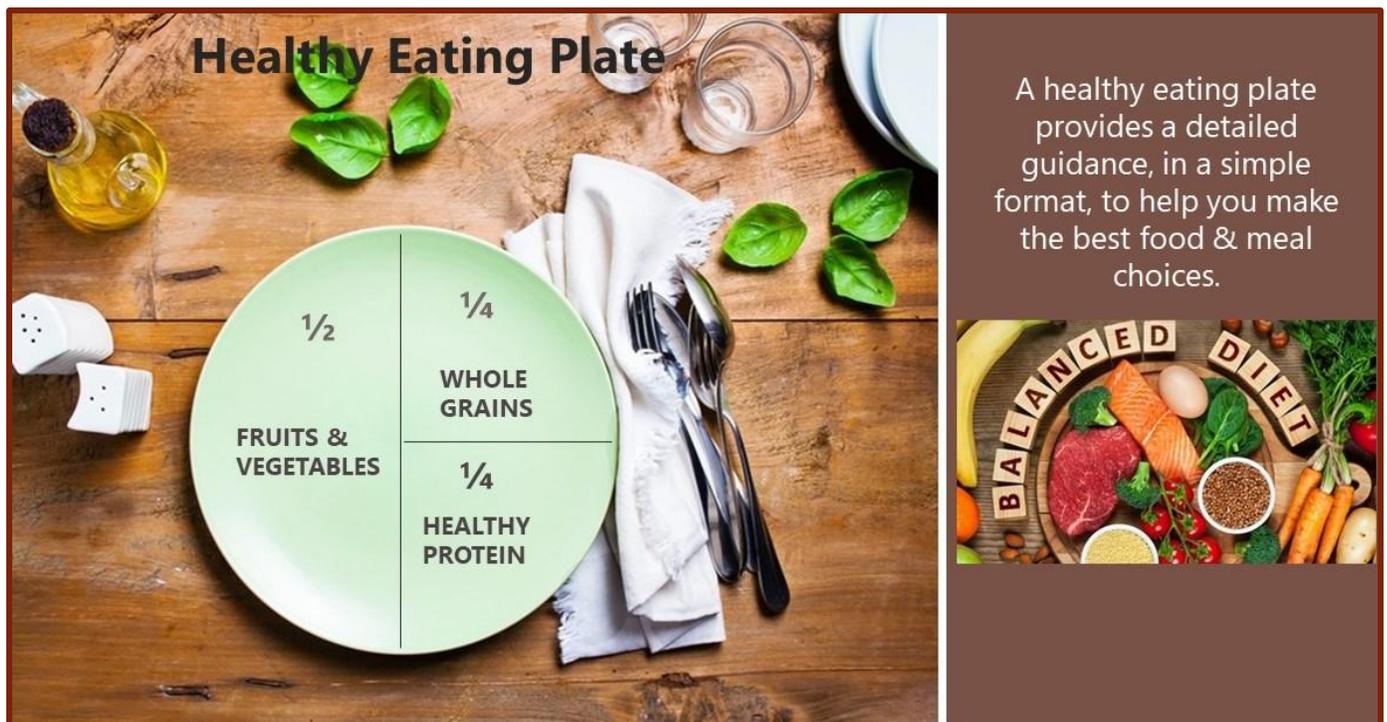


Making Lifestyle Changes - Nutritional Plan

♥ The goals for your nutritional plan/diet are to:

1. **Balance** energy intake and physical activity to achieve or maintain a healthy body weight.
2. **Reach your healthy weight and stay there!** Your goal is to achieve and maintain your ideal body weight (IBW). If you are overweight your heart has to work harder to pump. IBW can be achieved by exercising regularly and watching your diet. Your dietician/health care team can help you plan a diet which provides the proper amount of energy for you.
3. **Eat a well-balanced diet** to ensure you get all the vitamins and minerals you need.
4. **Provide adequate Potassium** – plenty fruits and vegetables.
5. **Lower sodium (salt) in the diet** to help lower edema (swelling).
6. **Prevent gastric distress**—you may need small meals with snacks & avoid foods that cause distress.
7. In the acute phase **restrict caffeine** intake.

□ **Eat a well-balanced diet – use the ‘Healthy Eating Plate’ as your guide.**



- **Make most of your meal vegetables and fruits – ½ of your plate:** Aim for color and variety, and remember that potatoes don't count as vegetables on the Healthy Eating Plate because of their negative impact on blood sugar.
 - **Go for whole grains – ¼ of your plate:** Whole and intact grains—whole wheat, barley, wheat berries, quinoa, oats, brown rice, and foods made with them, such as whole wheat pasta—have a milder effect on blood sugar and insulin than white bread, white rice, and other refined grains.
 - **Protein power – ¼ of your plate:** Fish, poultry, beans, and nuts are all healthy, versatile protein sources—they can be mixed into salads, and pair well with vegetables on a plate. Limit red meat and avoid processed meats such as bacon and sausage.
 - **Healthy plant oils – in moderation:** Choose healthy vegetable oils like olive, canola, soy, corn, sunflower, peanut, and others, and avoid partially hydrogenated oils, which contain unhealthy trans fats. Remember that low-fat does not mean “healthy.”
 - **Drink water, coffee, or tea:** Skip sugary drinks, limit milk and dairy products to one to two servings per day, and limit juice to a small glass per day.
 - **Stay active:** Staying active is also important in weight control. Importantly – appropriate activity in consultation with the health profession team.
- **Lower sodium (salt) in the diet**



Some helpful definitions are the following:

- Sodium Free: Less than 5 mg per serving
- Very low sodium: 35 mg per serving
- Low sodium: 140 mg per serving
- Reduced sodium: Sodium content is 25% less than the standard product
- Unsalted: No salt added

♥ Hints & tips to get you started:

- **Leave the saltshaker off the table and do not cook with salt.** Try experimenting with spices and fresh lemon. Look for salt-free seasoning blends in your grocery store spice section.
- **Learn to read food labels** to avoid foods high in sodium. See information later in booklet.
- **Purchase fresh and frozen vegetables** or vegetables canned without salt. If you have regular canned vegetables that you would like to use, rinse the vegetables and cook in a large amount of water to remove some of the salt.
- **Bake, broil, boil, steam, roast or poach foods without salt.** Add vegetables and herbs for seasonings.
- **Don't buy convenience foods** such as skillet dinners, deli foods, cold cuts, hot dogs, canned soups. They are all high salt.
- **When you eat out,** order baked, broiled, steamed or poached foods without breading, butter or sauces. Also ask that no salt be added. Go easy on the salad dressing. Most are high in salt. Ask for oil & vinegar for your salad or lemon wedges.
- **Stay away from convenience or “fast” foods.** Most are high in salt.
- **Eat fresh** or canned unsalted vegetables. Cook from scratch when-ever possible. For example:

Eat:

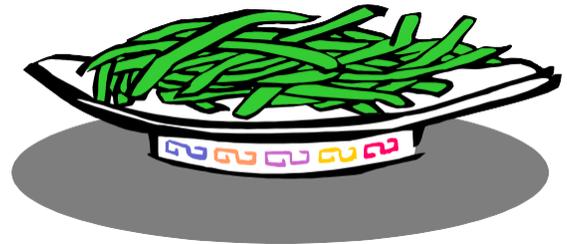
1 cup of cooked, fresh or frozen green beans:
(5 mg of sodium)

Instead of:

1 cup of canned green beans:
(340 mg of sodium)

1/2 cup of cooked rice:
(2 mg of sodium)

1/2 cup of Ready-to-eat Rice:
(1220 mg of sodium)



Foods Allowed

Milk & milk Products: Limit milk to 450 ml/day

Any milk - Whole, low fat, skim milk; or chocolate; cocoa; yogurt; eggnog; milk shake; 8 oz. milk substitute.

Cheese: Limit to ½ cup or 30 g

Dry curd cottage cheese, low fat or skim milk ricotta, farmer cheese, part- skim mozzarella.

Vegetables, (2+ servings): Fresh or frozen vegetables without sauces; Low-sodium canned vegetables and juices. White or sweet potatoes; salt free potato chips.

Fruit (2+ servings): All fruits, canned fresh or frozen and fruit juices.

Breads, cereal or pasta

(6-11 servings): Breads (all types), rolls and salt free crackers. Pasta, rice, and noodles cooked without salt. Cooked cereal without salt, dry low-sodium cereals; Shredded wheat, puffed rice & wheat.

Foods to Avoid

Milk & milk Products: Buttermilk (Can make salt free buttermilk by adding 1- tablespoon lemon juice to 1 cup of milk, let sit till thick.)

Cheese: regular cheeses and cheese spreads.

Vegetables: Regular canned vegetables and vegetable juices; sauerkraut; pickled vegetables and other prepared products that use brine; frozen vegetables in sauce. Regular potato chips.

Fruit: None – naturally low in sodium.

Breads, Cereal or Pasta: Breads and rolls with salted tops; quick breads, instant hot cereals, dry cereals with added sodium, regular crackers. instant hot cereals, dry cereals with added salt, regular crackers;



Foods Allowed

Meats or Substitutes (180 g/day): Any fresh or fresh-frozen meats, fish, poultry or game meat; low-sodium canned tuna, sardines or salmon; eggs; low sodium cheese; Dried peas and beans, not canned. Low-sodium peanut butter, salt free nuts and tofu.

Fats: Unsalted butter or margarine; unsalted salad dressings; vegetable oil, shortening; mayonnaise; light or sour cream.

Sweets and Desserts: Any sweets and desserts made without salt. Desserts made from milk should be made from milk allowance. Frozen juice bars, fruit ice, sorbet, sherbet. Jelly, jam, preserves. Plain cookies; animal crackers ginger snaps, etc.

Beverages: All beverages; limit caffeine if necessary. If you have a Water softener, obtain water for drinking and cooking before it is processed.

Soups: Low sodium commercial canned or dehydrated soups, homemade soups with meat, fresh or frozen vegetables and/or allowed milk and cooked without salt.

Foods to Avoid

Meats or Substitutes: Any meat, fish or poultry that is smoked, cured, salted or canned - bacon, chipped beef, corned beef, cold cuts, ham, hot dogs, and sausage; regular canned tuna or salmon; pickled eggs; regular hard and processed cheese, cheese spreads, regular peanut butter.

Fats: Regular butter or margarine, Commercial salad dressings.

Sweets and Desserts: Prepared mixes, store-bought pies, cakes & muffins. Baked goods made with baking powder or soda.

Beverages: Commercially softened water; beverages and foods made with commercially softened water. Sports drinks, canned tomato or vegetable juice, unless salt – free.

Soups: Regular bouillon, broth, or consommé; regular canned or dried commercial soups.

Foods Allowed

Seasonings & condiments:

Salt substitute (with physician's approval); pepper, herbs, spices, flavorings, vinegar, lemon & lime juice; salt-free seasoning mixes.

Condiments: low sodium condiments – catsup, chili sauce, mustard, pickles, Tabasco sauce, low-sodium baking powder,

Snack Items: unsalted snacks – nuts, seeds, pretzels, popcorn.

Note: When shopping for frozen dinners or convenience meals, choose items that provide 300mg or less per serving. Sodium levels can be found on the nutrition foods labels on the box.

Foods to Avoid

Seasonings & condiments:

Seasoning salts; garlic, celery, onion, seasoned, rock, kosher; and any other seasoning salt. Sodium compounds such as MSG – Accent.

Condiments: regular; catsup, chili sauce, mustard, pickles, relishes, olives, horseradish, gravy & sauce mixes, barbecue sauce, soy and teriyaki sauce, Worcestershire and steak sauce.

Snack Items: salted nuts, seeds, pretzels, and popcorn. All regular commercially prepared conveyance foods.



♥ Reading Food Labels

Reading food labels is the best way to be sure of the sodium content of foods. The sodium content must be listed on the package—check the **Nutrition Facts** panel.

➤ **Follow these easy steps to read the label:**

Nutrition Facts	
Per 1/2 cup (125 mL)	
Amount	% Daily Value
Calories 70	
Fat 0.5 g	1 %
Saturated Fat 0 g + Trans Fat 0 g	
Cholesterol 0 mg	
Sodium 250 mg	10 %
Carbohydrate 13 g	4 %
Fibre 2 g	
Sugars 6 g	
Protein 2 g	
Vitamin A 1 %	Vitamin C 2 %
Calcium 0 %	Iron 4 %

Step 1: Look at the serving size.

Step 2: Look at the sodium/serving. Compare that serving with the amount you might be eating.

Step 3: Choose foods with less than:

- ✓ 200 mg sodium/serving or
- ✓ 8% Daily Value (DV)

- This food has 250 mg of sodium in 1/2 cup.
- This food is not a good choice.
- If you eat 1 cup of this product, you will be eating 500 mg of sodium.

Food labeling definitions:

TERMS	SODIUM PER SERVING
Sodium (salt) free	Less than 5
Very low sodium	mg 35mg or
Low sodium	less 140 mg or
Reduced sodium	less
Unsalted	At least 75% reduction of sodium
	No salt added during processing

When you eat at home

- Reduce your salt gradually to give your taste buds time to adjust.
- Instead of adding salt to food when you cook or eat, season foods with herbs and seasonings that do not have salt.
- Avoid “instant” foods that come in a bag or a box.
- If you must eat canned goods, rinse the foods before cooking and eating them.
- When grocery shopping, choose items from the outer aisles, where most of the fresh foods are found.
- Plan your meals ahead of time (e.g., grill an extra chicken breast to use in sandwiches the next day).
- Make your own or choose low-sodium sauces.
- Make salad dressing with fresh garlic, herbs, olive oil and flavored vinegar.
- Add seasonings to soups during the last hour of cooking for maximum flavor.
- At the grocery store, choose items labelled “no salt added” or “low sodium.”

Useful information:



***1 teaspoon salt = 2,000 mg sodium *1 teaspoon baking soda = 821 mg sodium**
***1 teaspoon baking powder = 339 mg sodium *1 teaspoon MSG = 492 mg sodium**

Finding Low Sodium Recipes



1. Try out the HeFFSA ‘Heart Healthy Recipes’ at www.heffsa.org.
2. The Internet is an endless source of low-sodium recipes. Try searching for your favourite low sodium recipes. Use a search engine, such as Google, to find others.

When you eat out

- Ask for food cooked with no salt.
- Do not use the saltshaker.
- Avoid cheese or sauces.
- Avoid fried foods—choose grilled, baked or steamed items.
- Choose oil and vinegar salad dressing.
- Avoid bacon, sausages and ham.
- Request that foods be served without the high-salt condiments or sides (e.g., avoid relish, mustard, ketchup, pickles, potato chips, sauces and dressings). Ask for low-salt substitutions, such as tomatoes, cucumbers, lettuce, horseradish, oil and vinegar, and lemon.
- Eat foods in their fresh states because fresh foods are naturally low in sodium. Try grilled vegetables or fish rather than battered and deep fried.
- Ask for dressings and sauces on the side so you can control how much you add.
- A quick rule of thumb for fast food dining is to limit your sodium intake at one meal to $\frac{1}{4}$ of your total salt/sodium for the day (about 600 mg of sodium per meal). Most restaurants have a guide listing the sodium content of their food items.
- Bring half of your dish back home with you.
- If you can't avoid eating a high-sodium meal occasionally, cut down on the portion size and make low-sodium choices for the other meals of the day. For example, if you are celebrating a holiday and you know your dinner will be higher in sodium than usual, make sure to choose low-sodium options for your other meals.

❖ Examples of what to order when eating out

- Grilled steak or chicken
- Salad with balsamic vinegar and oil on the side so you can keep the portion to a small amount
- Steamed or roasted vegetables
- Baked potato
- Fruit salad or sorbet

♥ Fluids

- ❖ **The recommended fluid intake is 1,500 mL (6 cups) to 2,000 mL (8 cups) per day.**

When you have heart failure, you will be asked to reduce the amount of fluid you drink in a day. This is because the more you drink, the more blood there is in your body, and the harder your heart has to work to pump it all. This can cause swelling in your feet, legs or belly. Fluid can also build up in your lungs, which may cause you to have trouble breathing.

Find the fluid:

Any food or drink that is liquid at room and body temperature is considered a fluid. These items should be counted into your daily fluid intake.

Water	Juices	Tea	Alcohol	Ice cubes	Ice cream
Milk	Soft drinks	Coffee	Soup	Jelly	Sorbet

❖ **Water Weight**

Day-to-day weight gain is usually fluid gain, not weight gain by calories.

- Empty your bladder before getting on the scale.
- Weigh yourself in the same amount of clothing.
- Weigh yourself before breakfast.
- Buy a digital scale and use the same scale each day.
- Record your weight daily.

A sudden weight gain may be an early sign of fluid build-up.

If you notice muscle wasting and significant weight loss, you may need one-on-one counselling with your doctor or nutritionist.

Important

Call your nurse or doctor if your weight increases more than 2 pounds in one day or 5 pounds in a single week. Your diuretic dose or water pill may need to be increased.

To help you measure

1 cup = 225 g = 240 ml

4 cups = 910 g = 1000 ml = 1 liter

8 cups = 1800 g = 1.8 kg = 2000 ml = 2 liters

1 ml = 1 g

1g = 30 ml



♥ What can I do when I get thirsty?

- Snack on a small piece of cold or frozen fruit, such as a frozen grape or cold orange slice.
- Brush your teeth often.
- Rinse with chilled, alcohol-free mouthwash.
- Suck on hard candies or chew gum—try sugar-free varieties.
- Add a few drops of lemon juice to the water you drink.
- Use lip balm to keep your lips from drying out.
- Ask your pharmacist about artificial saliva.

♥ Track your fluid intake:

Measure your fluid intake over 24 hours until your fluid limit becomes routine. Fill a pitcher with water to equal your total daily fluid allowance. Every time you drink fluid, pour out an equal amount of water from the pitcher. The amount of water remaining is your fluid allowance for the rest of the day.

♥ Caffeine and High Salt Drinks

- Limit the intake of coffee, black tea or soda with caffeine.
- Avoid drinks high in sodium, such as: tomato or vegetable juices

If your appetite is poor

Sometimes when you are feeling sick, your appetite can decrease. You may lose muscle weight quickly and without trying. If you feel this is the case, please let your doctor know. You might need to be referred to a registered dietitian.

❖ Here are some tips to help if your appetite is poor:

- Eat smaller amounts of foods more often. Try eating every 2-3 hours.
- Eat more food when your appetite is best.
- Make every bite count. Eating half of a meal is still better than having nothing.
- Ideas for nutritious snacks include whole grain crackers and peanut butter or hummus, a piece of fruit and some cheese, frozen berries with granola and plain Greek yoghurt or an egg, chicken salad or tuna sandwich.
- Go for milk, milkshakes, yoghurt beverages or oral nutritional supplements such as Ensure instead of low energy fluids such as water, broth, tea or coffee.
- Have easy to prepare meals and snacks readily on hand for when you don't feel like cooking. Suggestions are granola bars, unsalted nuts, Greek yoghurt, pudding or cheese and crackers.
- You might want to use a service like Meals on Wheels or ask friends and family to help you with groceries and making your meals.
- Add fats and oils at each meal. Top your salads, vegetables, pasta or rice with a few teaspoons of liquid oil such as olive or canola. Spread margarine or butter on your bread, vegetables and potatoes. This will increase the energy content of your food.
- Avoid reduced-fat foods such as foods labelled "light", "low fat" or "fat free".
- Try adding powdered milk to your soups, breakfast cereal, puddings or scrambled eggs for extra protein.

Making Lifestyle Changes - Exercise

Muscles, particularly in the legs, may become weak due to heart failure. This is due to reduced blood flow and reduced activity. The weak muscles may slow you down as much as your heart does.¹³ Exercise helps to condition your heart muscle and gives you more energy to perform activities throughout the day.

❖ Be sure to check with your doctor before beginning an exercise program. Notify your doctor or nurse of dizziness, difficulty breathing, heart palpitations or extreme **fatigue** that occur with exercise. Do not exercise immediately after a heavy meal. Avoid extreme temperatures. Do not exercise if you are already excessively fatigued or feeling poorly.

□ **Aerobic exercise** is the best type of exercise for you, such as,

- ✓ Walking (even walking around the block or yard counts as exercise)
- ✓ Biking, swimming, dancing



□ **Cardiac Rehabilitation** can help you learn about your heart failure, lifestyle changes and exercise guidelines, while being supervised by health-care professionals. An individualized exercise program is based on the results of an exercise test and is modified to fit your needs. Cardiac rehabilitation programs must be ordered by your doctor and are not always covered by medical aid.

To be Safe, Follow these Exercise Tips:

Do.

- Know the type and level of exercise that is right for you. Try and walk on a flat track, avoid stairs and hills.
- Wear comfortable clothes and soft sole shoes with laces or sneakers.
- Start slowly. Gradually build up to 30 minutes of activity, three or four times per week (or whatever your doctor recommends). If you are unable to exercise for 30 minutes straight, try two 15-minute sessions to meet your goal.
- Exercise at the same time of day so it becomes a regular part of your lifestyle. For example, you might walk every Monday, Wednesday and Friday from noon to 12:30 p.m. However, don't skip your exercise if you can't make the scheduled time.
- Exercise with a friend.

Don't....

- Don't get discouraged if you have to stop due to decompensation of your heart failure. Gradually start again and work up to your old pace.
- Don't do exercises that require holding your breath, bearing down or sudden bursts of energy.
- Don't engage in any activity that causes chest pain, severe shortness of breath, dizziness or light-headedness. If these happen, stop what you are doing right away.
- Don't exercise right after meals or in extreme temperatures (below 5°C and above 30°C).
- Avoid heavy lifting.



Mindfulness and Managing Stress

Emotional stress and anxiety make the heart work harder, which can make symptoms worse. That is why patients and their caregivers should work together to keep stress under control.

Positive Actions:

❖ Practice Mindfulness for Better Health & Wellbeing

1. Eat mindfully...be in the moment while you plan, purchase & prepare.
2. Walk mindfully...be present and enjoy the experience.
3. Observe your breathing. ...
4. Connect with your senses. ...
5. Pause between action. ...
6. Listen wholeheartedly. ...
7. Get lost in the flow of doing things you love. ...
8. Take time out to reflect on your day.
9. Travel or mix up your routine.
10. Observe your thoughts and emotions.

❖ More strategies to manage stress

- Learn to accept things you can't change. You do not have to solve all of life's problems.
- Don't use smoking, drinking, overeating, drugs or caffeine to cope with stress. These will actually make things worse.

- Learn to say no. Do not promise too much. Give yourself enough time to get things done.
- Join a support group - maybe for people with heart disease, for women, for men, for retired persons or some other group with which you identify.
- Consider a mental health professional or clergy to help you manage stress.

Avoiding Colds and Flu

- Get a yearly influenza vaccine. Ask your doctor about the pneumococcal vaccine (to guard against the most common form of bacterial pneumonia).
- As much as possible, avoid anyone who has a cold or the flu. Stay out of crowds during the height of the flu season. If you are around someone who has a cold or flu, be sure to wash your hands.



Stop Smoking

People who smoke and have heart failure can automatically eliminate a major source of stress on the heart by quitting. Smoking causes abnormal heart rhythm, heart attacks, lung disease and lung infections. People who quit smoking are more likely to have their heart failure symptoms improve.

- Keep busy doing things that make it hard to smoke, like working in the garden, washing dishes and being more active.
- Find a substitute to reach for instead of a cigarette. Try a hard candy.
- Make it known to family and friends that you need to quit smoking and could really use their support. If your husband, wife, son or daughter smokes, ask them to quit with you.
- Ask your doctor about smoking cessation programs. Also discuss using medications that can help you quit smoking.

Other Ways to Improve Heart Function

- Lose weight if you are too heavy.** The heart does not have to beat as hard to send blood to all parts of a slim body.
- Avoid hard exercise and lifting heavy objects** to prevent sudden pumping demands on your heart. Your doctor may ask that you take daily walks or join a cardiac rehab program. Over time this may strengthen your heart muscle.
- Wear clothing that permit good blood flow in the legs.** Garters, hose with tight tops may slow blood flow to your legs and cause clots.
- Avoid temperature extremes.** The body works harder to keep body temperature normal when you are too hot or too cold.
- Try to stay away from people who have colds or the flu.** Ask your doctor if you should have a yearly flu shot and the one-time pneumonia shot.
- Limit alcohol.** If you consume alcohol, do so in moderation. It can contribute to heart failure by further damaging the heart muscle. If you have heart failure you may be advised to have no alcohol at all.¹³

Important Telephone Numbers

	NAME	TELEPHONE #
Primary Care Physician		
Cardiologist		
Other Specialist		
Clinic Nurse		
Home Care Nurse		
Hospital		
Pharmacy		
Nurse Care Manager		
Emergency Contact		
Equipment Company		

Notes:

References:

1. Pretorius SS. Chronic non-communicable diseases in a black South African population living in a low-resource community. 2016. <http://hdl.handle.net/10539/22199>.
2. Harvard T.H Chan School of Public Health. The Nutrition Source. The Healthy Plate. <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/healthy-eating-plate/>.
3. University Hospitals Health System. Living with heart failure. 2001. <https://www.heart.org/>.
4. Sliwa K & Pretorius S. Living with heart failure in Soweto. 2008. <http://www.socru.org/>.

Heart Failure Society
of South Africa



info@heffsa.org

www.heffsa.org