

HEALTH TIPS

Make Health Happen

Heart Failure

MOST PEOPLE WITH HEART FAILURE CAN LIVE NORMAL LIVES

What is heart failure?

When you have heart failure, it means your heart is too weak to pump the normal amount of blood through your body. It does not mean your heart has stopped or is about to. With heart failure:

- Your heart cannot pump as hard as it should.
- Blood and fluid back up into your lungs.
- Fluid builds up in your belly, legs, ankles and feet—they become swollen.
- You feel tired and short of breath – even from a very short walk.
- Your body does not get the oxygen it needs.

Heart failure may be caused by:

- High blood pressure
- Blocked arteries (heart disease)
- Past heart attacks
- Heart valve disease
- Heart muscle problems
- Infection of your heart valves or muscles

What should you do?

Be sure to go to your doctor for regular checkups. Tell your doctor if you:

- Feel tired.
- Are short of breath.
- Have a sudden increase in weight.
- Have increased swelling in ankles and/or lower legs.

Heart failure usually comes after having heart disease — like clogged arteries — for a long time. By changing some of your habits now, you can keep your heart healthier.

Check the heart-healthy habit you will work on first:

- ___ I will avoid salty foods.
- ___ I will drink less alcohol.
- ___ I will smoke less.
- ___ I will work on losing weight.
- ___ I will be more active.



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Helpful phone numbers for UniCare members only

Customer Care Center: 1-800-782-0095 (TTY 1-866-378-1634)

MedCall: 1-888-850-1108 (TTY 1-800-368-4424)

We can translate this for you at no cost.

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How to live with heart failure

Most people with heart failure can live normal lives. As your doctor will tell you, medications are very important. You may be taking more than one every day. They will help make you feel better and keep your heart healthy.

Here are a few things to keep in mind any time you are taking medications:

- It's good to know the names of all your medications.
- Some medications should be taken at a certain time of day.
- Medicines often have side effects, so talk to your doctor about them ahead of time.

To learn more about heart failure, go to nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/heartfailure.html.

Source:

National Institutes of Health, U.S. National Library of Medicine website: *Heart Failure*, nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/heartfailure.html (September 12, 2013).

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