

A Practical Guide for Heart Failure Patients



# FIGHT AGAINST Heart Failure<sup>SM</sup> Handbook



Dear Patient,

If you have been told you have heart failure, you may be anxious and have a lot of questions. What does it mean to have heart failure? How will heart failure impact your life? Can your heart failure be treated?

Heart failure is serious. But, you can often manage the symptoms to stay healthy and out of the hospital. This book will help you learn about the four key ways to control your symptoms. These are diet, exercise, lifestyle changes, and medication. You can use the journal pages to keep track of your weight, symptoms, and sodium intake on a daily basis.

Remember, four ways every day can help you Fight Against Heart Failure<sup>SM</sup>.

Sincerely,  
American Association of Heart Failure Nurses  
Preventive Cardiovascular Nurses Association  
Society of Chest Pain Centers

Fight Against Heart Failure<sup>SM</sup> is an educational program developed by the American Association of Heart Failure Nurses, the Preventive Cardiovascular Nurses Association, and the Society of Chest Pain Centers, and is sponsored by Scios Inc. Visit [www.fightheartfailure.com](http://www.fightheartfailure.com) for more information.

To order more Fight Against Heart Failure<sup>SM</sup> handbooks, call toll free 1-866-626-6636 or visit [www.fightheartfailure.com](http://www.fightheartfailure.com).



AAHFN  
AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF  
HEART FAILURE NURSES



PCNA  
Preventive Cardiovascular  
Nurses Association  
[www.pcna.net](http://www.pcna.net)



SOCIETY OF  
CHEST PAIN  
CENTERS  
[www.sccpc.org](http://www.sccpc.org)

American Association of Heart Failure Nurses  
[www.aahfn.org](http://www.aahfn.org)

Preventive Cardiovascular Nurses Association  
[www.pcna.net](http://www.pcna.net)

Society of Chest Pain Centers  
[www.sccpc.org](http://www.sccpc.org)

# Table of Contents

Introduction	4
My Medical Contacts	6
My Medications	8
Common Symptoms of Heart Failure	10
Limit Intake of Sodium	12
Limit Cholesterol and Fat	16
Exercise	18
Healthy Lifestyle Changes	20
Medication and Treatment Options	24
Other Things That Can Help	26
How to Use the Journal Pages	28
Notes	30

In this book, the word “clinician” refers to the many people who may give you medical care. This can include your doctor, nurse, physician assistant, and/or nurse practitioner.



# Introduction

If you have heart failure, you are not alone. Five million Americans have heart failure. The heart pumps blood through the body. It brings oxygen to the body's other organs, like the lungs and kidneys. Oxygen helps the body's organs do their jobs. But, when you have heart failure, your heart cannot pump blood through your body as well as it should. So, you can feel tired and weak. You can also have swelling, or fluid build-up, in your legs, feet, abdomen (stomach), and lungs.

It is important to pay attention to your heart failure symptoms and get treated for them. If you ignore the symptoms, your heart has to work even harder. It becomes even weaker. This may cause your heart failure to get worse, even to the point where you have to go to the hospital.

But, you can take steps to control your symptoms and help keep your heart failure from getting worse. Here's how:

- Watch your symptoms closely and call your clinician if your symptoms change or get worse.
- Work with your clinician to create a plan to help you control your heart failure symptoms. This plan will include things you should do every day. This might mean you need to watch your diet, exercise, take your medications, and make some lifestyle changes, like learning to deal better with stress.

## How This Book Can Help You

Read this book to learn more about heart failure symptoms and how you can help manage them. Use the daily journal pages in the back pocket to keep track of your symptoms, your weight, and your intake of sodium. Then, share what you wrote down with your clinician. Call your clinician if your symptoms change.

**IMPORTANT: The Web site and educational materials of the Fight Against Heart Failure<sup>SM</sup> program are not meant to provide medical advice. Also, the information provided through this program is not a substitute for professional healthcare. Talk with your doctor or other clinician to learn more about your own diagnosis, treatment, or condition.**

## Tips to Fight Against Heart Failure

- Take your medications.
- Eat a low-salt, heart-healthy diet.
- Get regular exercise.
- Quit smoking.
- Limit or avoid alcohol.
- Weigh yourself each day.
- Keep a daily log of your weight and symptoms.
- Manage stress.

Take Control



# My Medical Contacts

If you have a medical emergency, call 911.

## Primary Care/Family Doctor

Doctor's Name		
Nurse's Name		
Address		
City	State	Zip
Phone	Fax	
Email		

## Cardiologist

Doctor's Name		
Nurse's Name		
Address		
City	State	Zip
Phone	Fax	
Email		

## Heart Failure Specialist/Clinic\*

Name		
Address		
City	State	Zip
Phone	Fax	
Email		

\*Note: Not all patients are seen by a heart failure specialist or go to a heart failure clinic.

## Preferred Hospital

Name		
Address		
City	State	Zip
Main Phone Number	Other Number	

## Other Clinician

Name		
Address		
City	State	Zip
Phone	Fax	
Email		

## Other Clinician

Name		
Address		
City	State	Zip
Phone	Fax	
Email		

## Emergency Contacts

Name	Relationship
Home Phone	Cell Phone
Name	Relationship
Home Phone	Cell Phone



# My Medications

Use this chart to write down all of the medications you take. Include drugs you take for heart failure and for any other illness or condition. Write down the drug’s name, the prescription number on the label, the name of the clinician who prescribed it, and why you need to take it.

Be sure to include any over-the-counter medications and any vitamins or herbal supplements you take. These will not have a prescription number. If your clinician or hospital gives you a list of your medications, you can keep it in the back pocket of this book. Additional “My Medications” pages are available at [www.fightheartfailure.com](http://www.fightheartfailure.com).

Product Name	Prescription Number (Prescription Medications Only)	Prescribing Clinician’s Name	Pharmacy	Pharmacy’s Phone Number	Reason for Taking
<i>Lipitor® (atorvastatin)</i>	<i>3486789</i>	<i>Dr. John Smith</i>	<i>Walker Drugs</i>	<i>333-1234</i>	<i>Lowers cholesterol</i>

LIPITOR® is a registered trademark of Pfizer Inc.



# Common Symptoms of Heart Failure

## Common symptoms of heart failure include:

- **Shortness of breath.** You may feel like you do not get enough air when you breathe. You may “huff and puff” even when you are not doing anything tiring. If fluid has built up in your lungs, it makes it harder to breathe. This can get worse at night because when you lie down even more fluid can build up in and around your lungs.
- **Frequent coughing.** You may often cough. The cough can get worse at night.
- **Fast heart rate or heavy heart beat.** Your heart may feel like it is racing or pounding.
- **Tired and weak.** If you feel tired and weak, you cannot work and do the normal things you do every day. Even walking up stairs or carrying shopping bags is hard.
- **Swollen ankles, legs, and/or belly.** These are all places where fluid may build up. This can lead to swelling, making them seem “puffy” and larger than normal. Your shoes and/or rings may feel tight. Your clothes may also feel tight around your waist. This swelling is often worse at the end of the day.
- **Loss of appetite and/or nausea.** You may not want to eat even when you should be hungry. You also may feel sick to your stomach.
- **Weight gain.** When extra fluid builds up, it shows up on the scale as extra weight. So, you need to keep track of your weight each day.

Ask your clinician what you should do or when you should call if your symptoms change or if you gain (or lose) weight.

Use the journal pages in the back pocket of this book to keep track of your symptoms each day.

The sooner you get treated, the less likely you are to end up in the hospital.

## Follow a Heart Failure Management Plan

Your clinicians will work with you to create a plan to help you manage your heart failure. The key parts of this plan are diet, exercise, lifestyle changes, and medication. The next pages have information on each of these topics.

Follow this plan closely to feel better and stay healthy. Ask your clinician to explain things that aren't clear to you. Always check with your clinician before you make any changes.

Management Plan



# Limit Intake of Sodium

People with heart failure need to eat a low-sodium (low-salt) diet. Sodium is a mineral that your body uses in small amounts. Too much of it makes your body retain, or hold on to, water. Your heart then has to work harder to pump blood. This can make your symptoms worse.

The American Heart Association says that heart failure patients should consume (eat and drink) no more than 2000 mg of sodium a day. This might sound like a lot, but it isn't. Just one teaspoon of salt has 2300 mg of sodium. So, you have to closely watch what you eat and drink at each meal and snack.

## Limit Sodium Intake at Home

- Get rid of your salt shaker.
- Cook without salt.
- Flavor your food with bold spices, lemon, or vinegar instead of using salt or high-sodium bottled dressings or marinades.
- Use low-sodium recipes.
- Use low-sodium versions of your favorite foods.
- Eat fresh or frozen foods. If you have to eat canned or processed foods, rinse them before you cook or eat them.
- Ask your clinician if salt substitutes are safe for you.
- If you have heartburn or a headache, take medicines that do not have sodium bicarbonate or sodium carbonate in them.

## Limit Sodium Intake at Restaurants

Here are some tips to help you limit or avoid sodium when you eat at a restaurant:

### Do Order

- Food that is fresh and broiled, baked, or grilled.
- Mixed green salads or fruit as side dishes.

### Don't Order

- Food that is fried, frozen, or pre-made.
- French fries or potato or pasta salads.
- Dips, potato or nacho chips, salsas, pizza, or soups.
- Dishes made with a lot of sauce.

### How to Order

- Ask your server how much sodium and fat are in menu items. Choose foods that have the least sodium and fat per serving.
- Ask for dressings and sauces to be put on the side. Then, just use a little of them on your food or don't use them at all.
- Tell your server that you don't want cheese, MSG, salt, seasonings, or butter added to your food.

### Other Ideas

- Don't eat at fast food restaurants. Food in these places is often pre-made and can have a lot of sodium.
- Don't eat snacks from vending machines.
- Bring your own low-sodium, heart-healthy foods like fresh fruits, vegetables, or yogurt.





# Limit Intake of Sodium (contd.)

## What to Eat (and Avoid) on a Low-Sodium Diet

### Low-sodium foods

All of these foods are low in sodium only if they are not salted.

- Fresh beans, peas, lentils
- Cereals
- Seltzer water, club soda
- Yogurt
- Rice
- Vegetables (fresh and plain frozen)
- Fruits, fruit drinks (fresh and plain frozen)
- Non-salt herbs and spices
- Milk (cow's milk and soy milk)
- Fresh meats, fish, poultry

### High-sodium foods

Avoid these foods to help make it easier to stay below your daily sodium limit.

- Meats**
- Anchovies, sardines
  - Frozen breaded meats
  - Beef jerky
  - Lunch meats
  - Corned beef
  - Pastrami, salami
  - Canned tuna, canned salmon
  - Knockwurst, kielbasa
  - Hot dogs, bologna
  - Bacon, sausage

### Vegetables

- Olives and pickles
- Canned vegetables
- Sauerkraut
- Stewed tomatoes
- Tomato and vegetable juice

### Starches

- Canned baked beans
- Corn chips and potato chips
- Instant hot cereals and pancake mixes
- Boxed macaroni and cheese
- Popcorn
- Frozen waffles

### Milk Products

- Buttermilk
- Canned milk

### Drinks/Liquids

- Tonic water
- V-8 juice
- Bloody Mary mix

### Other

- Bouillon cubes and broth
- Canned soups
- Salted nuts and mixed nuts

## Read Nutrition Labels

Food packages have nutrition labels. The labels list how much sodium is in one serving. But, the package may have more than one serving. The sodium content in one serving size might not be too much. But, if you eat the whole package, there might be too much sodium.

The label to the right says there are two servings per container. The sodium content for one serving is 970 mg, but for the whole package, it is 1940 mg. If you ate all of it, you would almost reach your whole day's sodium limit of 2000 mg. You should not eat this food since it is too salty!

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 5oz.	
Serving Per Container 2	
Amount Per Serving	
<b>Calories</b> 120	Calories From Fat 0
% Daily Value*	
<b>Total Fat</b> 0g	0%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%
<b>Cholesterol</b> 5mg	2g
<b>Sodium</b> 970mg	40%
<b>Total Carbohydrates</b> 26g	9%
Dietary Fiber 2g	9%
Sugar 16g	
<b>Protein</b> 3g	
Vitamin A 8%	Vitamin C 60%
Calcium 2%	Iron 2%
*Percent daily values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.	

Sodium Content Per Serving





# Limit Cholesterol and Fat

## Cut Cholesterol

Cholesterol is a wax-like fat. It is found in the bloodstream and the body’s cells. Your liver makes cholesterol, but you also get more of it when you eat foods like meats, poultry, fish, and dairy products.

Too much cholesterol in the blood causes a build-up in the walls of blood vessels. Over time, this can clog your arteries. It can lead to coronary artery disease and make your heart failure worse. So, you should take as much cholesterol out of your diet as you can.

Ask your clinician how much cholesterol you should take in each day. He or she might also prescribe a medicine to help keep your cholesterol at a safe level.

## Cut Fat

Stay away from saturated fats. These are most often found in food that comes from animals like beef, chicken, pork, and whole milk dairy products. Saturated fats can make your cholesterol level go up. This can lead to coronary artery disease and heart attack. It can also make your heart weaker. Monosaturated fats come from vegetables. They can help bring your cholesterol down. Monosaturated fats are found in canola, olive, and peanut oils. They are also in avocados, olives, and many nuts and seeds.

# Substitute for Satisfaction

## Instead of...

- Whole milk
- Ice cream
- Eggs
- Cheese
- Fried foods
  
- Processed meats
- Chicken and turkey (with skin)

## Try...

- Non-fat milk
- Low-fat frozen yogurt
- Egg whites
- Low-fat cheese
- Baked, steamed, or grilled foods (without butter or added salt)
- Fresh, lean cuts of meat
- Chicken and turkey (without skin)



# Exercise

If you have heart failure, you have to keep your heart strong. Your heart is a muscle, and exercise can help make it stronger. There are a lot more reasons why exercise is good for you. It can help you lose weight or stay at a healthy weight. It can help reduce heart failure symptoms. It can even lower cholesterol levels and blood pressure. It can help you get rid of stress and give you more energy. And, it can lead to better circulation.

## How to Exercise

- Walking is best. Start slowly. As you get stronger, over time, walk for longer amounts of time.
- Wear flat shoes and clothes that are comfortable.
- Exercise at the same time each day so that it becomes a habit.
- Don't exercise if it's very hot or very cold outside, right after you eat, or if you do not feel well.
- Try new activities and ask friends or family to join you to make it more fun.
- Stay away from activities where you have to hold your breath or bear down, such as lifting weights.

## Don't Overdo It

If you start having any of these symptoms, slow down. If the symptoms don't go away, call 911 or the emergency response system in your area.

- Irregular heart rate (pulse).
- More shortness of breath (you can't finish a sentence, or you are short of breath after you stop exercising).
- More tired or weak than usual.
- Dizzy or lightheaded.
- Chest pain or tightness.
- Pain in your jaw, neck, shoulders, or arms.
- Nausea or vomiting.

Ask your clinician before you start or change an exercise program. Always do what your clinician tells you and listen to your body. Only do what feels right to you.

# Exercise Program



# Healthy Lifestyle Changes

You can make changes in your daily life that can help you stay healthy. Don't try to make too many changes at once. If you make changes slowly, they are more likely to last and become habits. Make small changes first. Then take on bigger ones. You also may want to write down all the changes that you want to make. This can help you decide where to start.

## Watch Your Weight

Weight gain can be a sign that your body is holding on to fluids. This can lead to swelling. It may also be a sign that your heart failure is getting worse.

**IMPORTANT: Ask your clinician what you should do or when you should call if you gain weight.**

Your clinician will set a rule for you to follow, such as, "Call us if you gain two or more pounds in one day."

Weigh yourself each day at the same time. If you see that you have gained weight, follow your clinician's advice about calling them.

## Stay at a Healthy Weight

Less body fat and more muscle means less strain on your heart. So, try to stay at a healthy weight, and be as lean as you can be. If you cut fats and calories from your diet, you can help limit, and maybe even lower, how much body fat you have.

Exercise may help you stay at a healthy weight. It can also build muscle and better control your symptoms. Ask your clinician what diet and exercise is right for you.

## Keep Track of Your Symptoms

It is important for you to keep track of your symptoms. Write down how you feel each day. This can help you know if your symptoms are getting worse or if you have new ones. It can also help you decide if you need to call your clinician.

Use the journal pages in the back pocket of this book to keep track of your symptoms each day.

Journal



# Healthy Lifestyle Changes (contd.)

## Reduce Stress

Stress makes your blood pressure go up. This makes your heart work harder. It may make your heart failure symptoms worse. You can't avoid all stress, but you should try to relax and avoid events that cause stress when you can. Here are some ideas:

- Take up a quiet hobby, like gardening or painting.
- Do things you enjoy like reading or spending time with friends.
- Write down how you feel. Putting your thoughts on paper can help you feel better.
- Go for a walk or get other exercise.
- Spend time with caring friends, family, or a support group.
- Learn to manage your time better. Don't take on too many things at once.
- If you can, avoid stressful settings, like rushing to appointments or sitting in heavy traffic.
- Meditate or do breathing exercises (see box at right).

Ask your clinician for other tips on how to manage stress.

## Limit or Avoid Alcohol

Alcohol makes it harder for the heart to work. So, most clinicians tell their heart failure patients not to drink any alcohol. Ask your clinician how much alcohol (if any) is safe for you.

## Stop Smoking

Smoking hurts the lungs and the heart and is not good for anyone. It can also make heart failure worse. If you smoke, you should stop now! Ask your clinician about tools to help you quit.

Also, stay away from places where other people smoke so that you don't breathe in any second-hand smoke.

## Try This Quick and Easy Breathing Exercise to Help Reduce Stress

- Sit in a comfortable chair and put your hands in your lap, or lie down. Close your eyes.
- Think about being in a peaceful place, like walking barefoot in a meadow or lying on a beach. Hold that picture in your mind.
- Breathe in slowly and deeply through your nose. Take the air into your belly. Breathe out slowly through your mouth.
- Each time you breathe out, repeat a calming word or phrase like "relax, let go".
- Do this for 5 to 10 minutes.

Reduce Stress



# Medication and Treatment Options

Medications play a key role in treating heart failure. They can also stop it from getting worse.

Treatments for heart failure differ from one patient to another. Your doctor will prescribe treatments for you based on the cause of your heart failure and how severe it is. But, all heart failure patients should get the following drugs unless there is some reason they cannot take the drug:

- **ACE (angiotensin-converting enzyme) inhibitors.** Help lower your blood pressure.
- **Angiotensin II receptor blockers (ARB).** Help lower your blood pressure.
- **Beta blockers.** Keep your heart rate from increasing. Also, help lower your blood pressure.

Other treatment options your doctor might prescribe for you are:

- **Diuretics (or water pills).** Help the kidneys get rid of salt and water from the blood. They make you urinate more. This helps to lower high levels of fluid in people with heart failure.
- **Aldosterone inhibitors.** Block aldosterone. Aldosterone is a hormone in the body that causes the body to retain, or hold on to, sodium and water.
- **Vasoactive agents.** Widen or relax the walls of the blood vessels. ACE inhibitors, angiotensin II receptor blockers, nitroglycerin, and calcium channel blockers are all vasoactive drugs.
- **Digoxin.** Makes the heart pump more strongly. It may also help control certain types of irregular heartbeats.
- Cardiac devices set in the body such as special pacemakers and/or defibrillators:
  - **Pacemakers** are used to help the heart pump better.
  - **Defibrillators** are used to correct a dangerous abnormal heart rhythm. If the heart stops, a defibrillator can help jump start it.

Only your doctor can tell you what treatments are right for you.



## Other Things That Can Help

### How to Talk to Your Clinician

- Write down a list of questions before you visit your clinician. Bring the list with you.
- Write down your symptoms and sodium intake each day. Then, share what you wrote down with your clinician.
- Write down what your clinician tells you so that you can recall details after your visit.
- Bring someone with you to help you ask questions and take notes.
- Ask any questions you have about heart failure and about your plan to manage heart failure.
- Ask your clinician to repeat or explain something if it isn't clear to you.
- Ask your clinician before you start or stop any medications.

### Where to Get More Help

Ask your family doctor or cardiologist to refer you to a **doctor who is an expert in treating heart failure**. You may also be able to find a heart failure expert by calling a local heart transplant center.

The heart failure expert likely will work with a **heart failure clinic**, where a team of clinicians can help you manage your heart failure.

Ask your clinician about a **cardiac rehabilitation program** near you. Ask how they can help you with your exercise program. **Note: Check with your health insurance plan first to make sure they will cover your visit to a cardiac rehabilitation program.**



# How to Use the Journal Pages

Here’s how you should use the daily journal pages in the back pocket of this book.

1. Each front-and-back page has room for you to record a week’s worth of information. Write in each day’s date on both sides.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
date: 2/4/08	date: 2/5/08	date: 2/6/08	date: 2/7/08

2. The front side of each journal page has your **Symptom Tracker**. At the top of the **Symptom Tracker** write your weight and the time you weighed yourself. You should weigh yourself at the same time every day.

Weight and time of day	182 lbs 9:10 am	183 lbs 9:03am	182 lbs 9:05am	181 lbs 9:07am
------------------------	--------------------	-------------------	-------------------	-------------------

3. Below that is a list of symptoms. If you have any of the symptoms listed, circle the number that describes best how you feel. For instance, if you are a little short of breath, circle the number 1. If you are very short of breath, circle the number 5. If you do not have a symptom that is listed, do not circle a number.

Shortness of breath	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Frequent coughing	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5

4. On the back side of each journal page is your **Sodium Tracker**. At the top of each column is “2000 mg”. This is the amount of sodium you should eat per day. Each time you eat, write down what you eat and how much sodium it has. Then, subtract the sodium content. This will help you know when you are close to your sodium limit.

Monday	
date: 2/4/08	
Food	Sodium
	2000 mg
Whole wheat toast	-148 mg
	1852 mg
Unsalted butter	-2 mg
	1850 mg
Tea	-5 mg
	1845 mg
Peach	-0 mg
	1845 mg
	Etc.

Subtract the amount of sodium in your food from the 2000 mg/day limit.

After eating the wheat toast, for example, you would have 1852 mg of sodium left for that day.

Ask your clinician what you should do or when you should call if your symptoms change or if you gain weight. The sooner you get treated, the less likely you are to end up in the hospital.

Bring your journal pages with you to your clinician’s visit and share your journal entries.

To order more journal pages, call toll-free at 1-866-626-6636. You can also download more journal pages at [www.fightheartfailure.com](http://www.fightheartfailure.com).





# Notes

Remember: **four ways every day...**

1. Diet
2. Exercise
3. Lifestyle changes
4. Medication

...can help you Fight Against Heart Failure<sup>SM</sup>!

Four Ways



**This book is part of Fight Against Heart Failure<sup>SM</sup>, an educational program for patients with heart failure and their caregivers.**

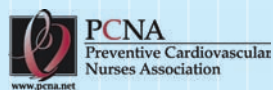
**This program was developed by the American Association of Heart Failure Nurses, the Preventive Cardiovascular Nurses Association, and the Society for Chest Pain Centers, and is sponsored by Scios Inc.**

**To order more handbooks or journal pages, visit [www.fightheartfailure.com](http://www.fightheartfailure.com) or call 1-866-626-6636.**

Please visit the following Web sites for more information:



American Association of Heart Failure Nurses  
[www.aahfn.org](http://www.aahfn.org)



Preventive Cardiovascular Nurses Association  
[www.pcna.net](http://www.pcna.net)



Society of Chest Pain Centers  
[www.scpccp.org](http://www.scpccp.org)

**The Web site and educational materials of the Fight Against Heart Failure<sup>SM</sup> program are not meant to provide medical advice. Also, the information provided through this program is not a substitute for professional healthcare. Talk with your doctor or other clinician to learn more about your own diagnosis, treatment, or condition.**