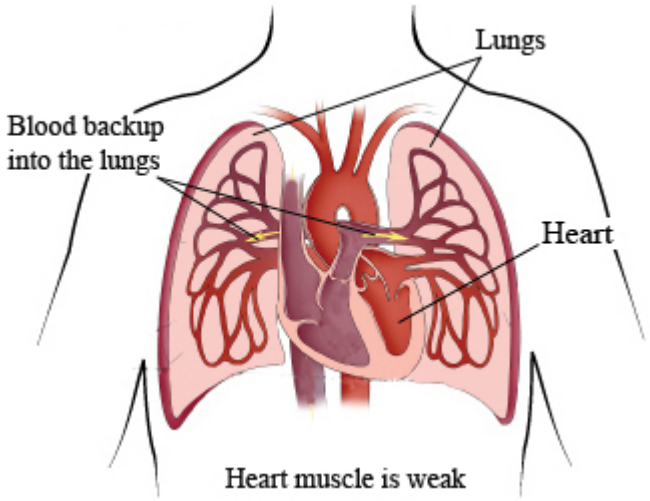
Heart Failure

Heart failure (HF) means your heart has trouble pumping blood. The blood is not circulated very well in your body because your heart is weak. HF may cause blood to back up into your lungs. This is commonly called "fluid in the lungs." HF may also cause your ankles and legs to puff up (*swell*). It is important to take good care of yourself when you have HF.

MEDICINE



- Take your medicine as told by your doctor.
- **Do not** stop taking your medicine unless told to by your doctor.
- Be sure to get your medicine refilled before it runs out.
- **Do not** skip any doses of medicine.
- Tell your doctor if you cannot afford your medicine.
- Keep a list of all the medicine you take. This should include the name, how much you take, and when you take it.
- Ask your doctor if you have any questions about your medicine. **Do not** take over-the-counter medicine unless your doctor says it is okay.

WHAT YOU EAT

- **Do not** drink alcohol unless your doctor says it is okay.
- Avoid food that is high in fat. Avoid foods fried in oil or made with fat.
- Eat a healthy diet. A dietitian can help you with healthy food choices.
- Limit how much salt you eat. **Do not** eat more than 2,000 milligrams (*mg*) of salt (*sodium*) a day.
- **Do not** add salt to your food.
- **Do not** eat food made with a lot of salt. Here are some examples:
  - Canned vegetables.
  - Canned soups.
  - Canned drinks.
  - Hot dogs.
  - Fast food.
  - Pizza.
  - Chips.

CHECK YOUR WEIGHT

- Weigh yourself every morning. You should do this after you pee (*urinate*) and before you eat breakfast.
- Wear the same amount of clothes each time you weigh yourself.
- Write down your weight every day. Tell your doctor if you gain 3 or more pounds (1.4 kilograms) in 1 day, 5 pounds (2.3 kilograms) in a week.

BLOOD PRESSURE MONITORING

- Buy a home blood pressure cuff.
- Check your blood pressure as told by your doctor. Write down your blood pressure numbers on a sheet of paper.
- Bring your blood pressure numbers to your doctor visits.

SMOKING

- Smoking is bad for your heart.
- Ask your doctor how to stop smoking.

EXERCISE

- Talk to your doctor about exercise.
- Ask how much exercise is right for you.
- Exercise as much as you can. Stop if you feel tired, have problems breathing, or have chest pain.

GET HELP IF:

- You have trouble breathing.
- You have a cough that does not go away.
- You cannot sleep because you have trouble breathing.
- You gain 3 or more pounds (1.4 kilograms) in 1 day or 5 pounds (2.3 kilograms) in a week.
- You have puffy ankles or legs.
- You have an enlarged (*bloated*) belly (*abdomen*).
- You pass out (*faint*).

GET HELP RIGHT AWAY IF:

- You have really bad chest pain or pressure. This includes pain or pressure in your:
  - Arms.
  - Jaw.
  - Neck.
  - Back.

If you have any of the above problems (*symptoms*), **call your local emergency services (911 in U.S.). Do not** drive yourself to the hospital.

MAKE SURE YOU:

- Understand these instructions.
- Will watch your condition.
- Will get help right away if you are not doing well or get worse.

Be sure to keep all your doctor appointments.

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