

### HOW IS HEART FAILURE DIAGNOSED?

Symptoms of heart failure, such as increasing fatigue and shortness of breath, will generally prompt a visit to a doctor. The doctor will perform a complete physical examination and ask about medical history and symptoms. If heart failure is suspected, your doctor will probably order certain tests. The most common diagnostic tests are:

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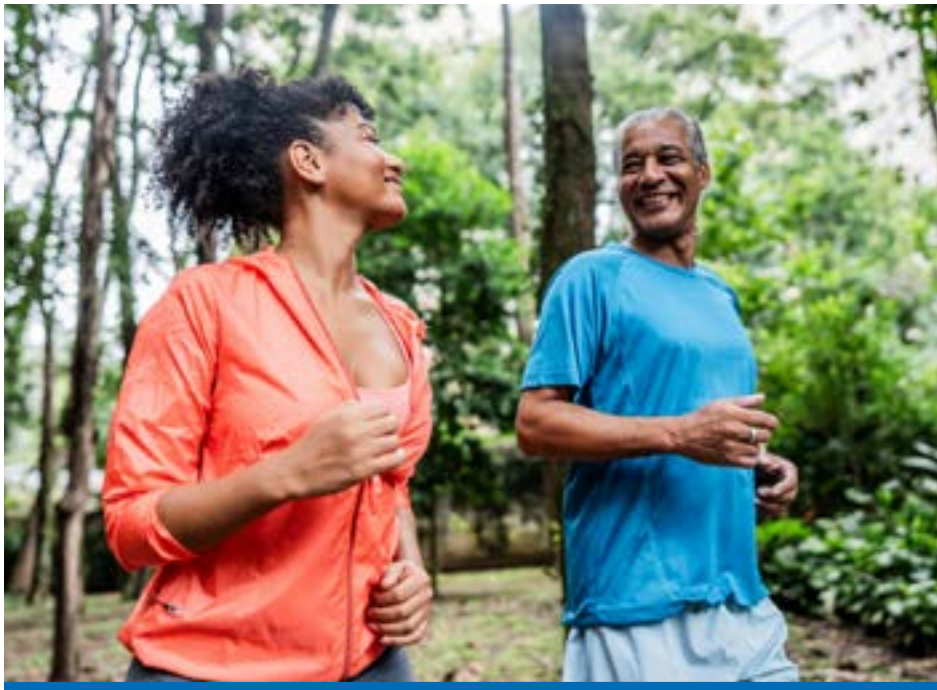
**Chest X-ray:** Determines if the heart is enlarged or if there is congestion in the lungs

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## Healthy Lifestyle Recommendations

You can help control your health by adopting healthy lifestyle habits. Here is a quick list of suggestions to help you make the necessary changes in your life.

### 1. **Schedule and keep regular appointments with your doctor:**

Your doctor is the one best able to help you deal with your situation. Other disease processes (co-morbidities) may play a role in your heart failure's progression. It is important for you to tell your doctor if you are being seen by other physicians for other health reasons.

### 2. **Limit salt in your diet:**

Salt causes fluid to build up in your body. This can effect your health greatly if you have a history of heart related diseases. Limiting the salt you eat can help reduce swelling and fluid buildup in your lungs. You will need to read the labels on processed foods. Many contain a lot of sodium, a component of salt. Do not add salt to your food. Salt substitutes may help add flavor if you like the taste of salt. Using other spices may also help.

### 3. **Lose weight if you are overweight:**

Losing weight helps you feel better and makes it easier to be more active. Losing weight may improve your blood cholesterol. High blood pressure levels may go down. High blood sugar levels may be better controlled if your weight is within the proper range for your height and bone structure. Don't try fad diets. Eat smaller portions of low-fat, low-calorie foods, and eat a balanced diet. Broiling or baking is preferable to frying your food. Eat less bread and desserts. Eat lean meat, fish and poultry without skin. Eat more fruits, whole grain and vegetables. Limit alcohol and high-calorie beverages. Be as physically active as your health condition will allow.

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**4. Eat a healthy balanced diet low in fat and rich in fiber:**

The American Heart Association recommends limiting total fat intake to less than 30 percent of your daily calories. Read the labels on food products and choose ones with low fat and cholesterol. Go easy on saturated fats. Fruits and vegetables, such as apples, broccoli and carrots, are good sources of fiber. Whole grain breads, cereals and beans are especially good sources of fiber and are low in fat (provided that fat is not added during preparation).

**5. Try to be as active as possible, but stay within what your health condition allows:**

Talk to your doctor about the type of activities you can do. Many activities require little or no equipment. Brisk walking only requires a comfortable pair of walking shoes. Check local shopping malls, as many of them are open early and late for people who do not wish to walk alone, in the dark or in bad weather.

**6. Do not smoke:**

Smoking is a risk factor for heart disease that you can control, but kicking the habit can be tough. Don't give up if you don't succeed on the first try. Many people who have quit tried several times before they succeeded. If you smoke, pick a quit day now. For an additional resource related to stopping smoking:

**ucanquit2.org** – This DoD-sponsored site provides the opportunity to:

- Learn more about tobacco cessation.
- Develop a personalized plan for quitting.
- Create a personal or public blog.

**7. Get your blood pressure checked regularly:**

Your health is your responsibility, so make sure you know your blood pressure and take measures to control your risk factors. Eat a diet low in salt and saturated fat, get 30 minutes of physical activity on most or all days of the week and limit your alcohol intake to no more than one drink per day for women and two per day for men. The American Heart Association recommends maintaining a blood pressure of 120/80 or less. 120-139/80-89 is considered pre-hypertensive. Blood pressure of 140 or higher for systolic or 90 or higher for diastolic is considered high and should be evaluated by a physician immediately. If your blood pressure is 140/90 or higher, you are at risk for stroke, heart attack and other complications of high blood pressure.

If you have been prescribed medication for your blood pressure, take it exactly as your doctor has prescribed.

If you are experiencing difficulties such as unpleasant side effects, talk to your doctor about them immediately.

**8. Get your cholesterol levels checked:**

High blood cholesterol is one of the risk factors for heart disease you can do something about. A total cholesterol level of under 200 mg/dl is desirable and usually puts you at a lower risk for heart disease. If your blood cholesterol level is high (240

or higher), your doctor will want to check your level of LDL-cholesterol ("bad" cholesterol) and HDL-cholesterol ("good" cholesterol). Eating less fat, especially saturated fat can lower your blood cholesterol level. Read food labels. Look on the nutrition label for the amount of saturated fat, total fat and cholesterol. The highest percentage ingredient is listed first. Go easy on foods that list fats or oil as the first ingredient.

Your doctor may prescribe medication to lower your cholesterol if diet and exercise are not effective. As with all medications, you should take the medication as your doctor has prescribed.

**9. Get your blood sugar level checked:**

Diabetes (high blood sugar levels) is another risk factor for heart disease you can do something about. If you have diabetes, the foods you eat play an important role in your treatment plan.

**10. Do not use illegal drugs.**

**11. Limit alcohol consumption to one drink per day or eliminate it altogether:**

One drink is defined as 1.5 fluid ounces of 80-proof spirits, one fluid ounce of 100-proof spirits, four fluid ounces of wine or 12 fluid ounces of beer. Drinking too much alcohol raises blood pressure, can cause heart failure and can lead to stroke. It also adds calories, contributes to obesity and makes it harder to lose weight. If you don't drink, don't start. If you do drink, talk to your doctor about drinking in moderation.

**12. Rest frequently and get enough sleep:**

If you have heart failure, you need to schedule time every day for rest and relaxation. Rest times are essential because they give the heart a chance to pump more easily. Try napping after lunch, putting your feet up for a few minutes every couple of hours or sitting down while doing certain household tasks, such as preparing food or ironing. To improve nighttime sleep, use pillows to prop up your head, and avoid naps and big meals right before bedtime. Sometimes diuretics (water pills) can be timed so they're less likely to cause you to urinate at night. This usually means taking them in the morning. Your doctor can give you more information about this.

**13. Manage stress in your life:**

There are two basic kinds of stress: Sudden stress is often triggered by an unexpected event or discovery; progressive stress builds up over time and reflects our everyday problems, hassles and nagging worries. Everyone deals with problems, but when too many unresolved problems or worries stack up, an unhealthy situation can develop. That's why it's important to identify all the sources of your stress and deal with them one by one.

You can find helpful hints for dealing with stress by taking advantage of these resources:

**www.HumanaMilitary.com** – Select beneficiary, health & wellness, wellness information and then select the relevant topic.

**nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus** – This website provides information on stress and many other health topics.

# Will I Need To Take Medications ?

You will probably need to take a combination of medications if you are experiencing heart failure. Medications do not cure heart failure but do help you manage your symptoms. The goals of medication treatment are to:

- Relieve or control symptoms of heart failure
- Improve daily function and quality of life
- Slow the progression of the disease
- Reduce the risk of complications, hospitalization and premature death

Medications are used to treat the problems associated with heart failure, including:

- Fluid buildup and/or swelling
- Reduced pumping ability of the heart
- The effects of the body's attempt to compensate for heart failure
- Underlying conditions that can lead to heart failure, such as high blood pressure, coronary heart disease or diabetes
- Prevention of complications

It is important that you take your medications exactly as prescribed by your doctor. If you don't, your heart failure may worsen, or sudden heart failure may develop.



## FROM THE CLINICIAN



Barb is a nurse with the disease management department that has a unique view on the program. Barb not only provides education for beneficiaries, but has been diagnosed with diabetes since the age of eight. Barb reports that her job gives her such satisfaction because she is able to see improvement in the health of beneficiaries every day. Since she is able to see diabetes from both an educator and patient level, she has some tips she wants to share with all of you.

1. **Write down and ask questions as they occur.** This gives you some control at your appointment and better enables you to take care of yourself.
2. **Take responsibility for understanding your diabetes, how foods affect you, how your blood sugar trends occur.** The more information you gather about yourself and the more you learn the better you are able to care for yourself.
3. **Advocate for yourself.** Through this program we educate on recommended testing. Providers work really hard to care for their patients, however, providers see many patients and sometimes things can be forgotten. By knowing about diabetes and your body you can talk with your provider and ensure that all testing is up to date.

4. **It is okay to have feelings of burnout.** These are normal feelings. It is important to talk about your feelings and if needed find a healthy outlet to aide with them. Anytime feelings of burnout occur try to think about goals that you are ready to work on and change, and also, take into consideration the long term ramifications of any action.
5. **Be honest with yourself and your providers.** By holding yourself accountable and looking at actions, change can occur. By knowing what changes you are ready and able to make, a care plan can be developed.

The role of the nurse in this program is to enable you, our beneficiaries. We educate, but also support, cheer and advocate. We relish in victories and build trust to enable us to help through your hardships. Our goal is not to control your health, but help you to control your own health. We do this through determining where you are in your health journey, what steps you are ready to take and what steps you hope to take soon. This program has allowed me to get to know people and what is important to them and allowed me to guide and support to fulfill their goals and improve or maintain their health.



# Commonly asked heart failure questions and answers

## WHAT IS HEART FAILURE?

Heart failure occurs when your heart doesn't pump as much blood as your body needs. This may be a gradual process where the body will compensate initially. As the heart becomes less effective, the body compensates by:

- Retaining salt and water to increase the blood volume
- The heart rate increases
- The heart begins to enlarge

Over time, these efforts to compensate decrease the heart's function and worsen heart failure. Blood starts to back up in the veins leading to the heart. This leads to fluid to build up in the lungs and other parts of the body, causing shortness of breath and other symptoms of heart failure.

## HOW QUICKLY DOES HEART FAILURE DEVELOP?

Usually, heart failure is a chronic disease. Long-term, the condition tends to gradually become worse. By the time someone is diagnosed, chances are the heart has been losing some of its pumping capacity for months or years. At first, the heart tries to make up for this by enlarging, developing more muscle mass and pumping faster. The body tries to compensate in other ways:

- Blood vessels narrow to keep the blood pressure up.
- The body diverts blood away from less important parts of the body to maintain flow to the heart and the brain.

Eventually the heart can't keep up, and the person experiences some or all of the following symptoms:

- Dizziness or weakness
- Fatigue
- Shortness of breath
- Cool and clammy skin
- Sensation of rapid irregular heart beat

## AS HEART FAILURE PROGRESSES, OTHER SYMPTOMS DEVELOP:

- Swelling (edema) or fluid build-up in the legs, ankles and feet
- Sudden weight gain
- Difficulty sleeping or concentrating, waking up short of breath
- A dry hacking cough, especially when lying flat
- Nausea
- Abdominal tenderness, swelling or pain

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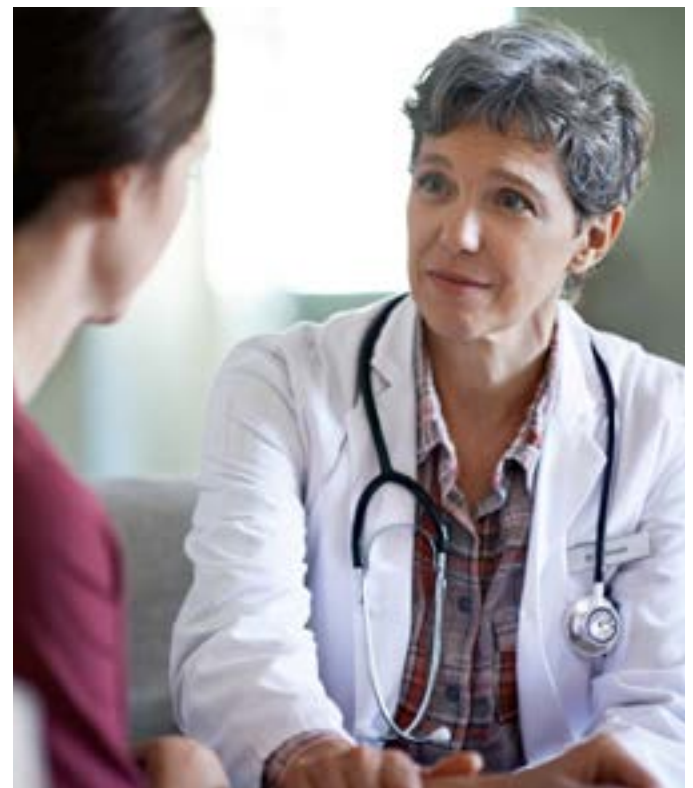
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## CORN AND BLACK BEAN BURRITOS

**Prep time:** 20 minutes

**Cook time:** 5 minutes

**Yield:** 12 burritos

**Serving size:** 1 burrito

### Ingredients:

¼ C scallions, rinsed and sliced into ¼" wide circles (including green tops)  
 ¼ C celery, rinsed and finely diced  
 1 ¼ C frozen yellow corn  
 ½ ripe avocado, peeled and diced  
 2 tbsp fresh cilantro, chopped  
 1 can black beans, drained and rinsed  
 ¼ C reduced fat shredded cheddar cheese  
 ¼ C salsa or taco sauce (look for lowest sodium version)  
 12 whole wheat tortillas (9")

### Directions:

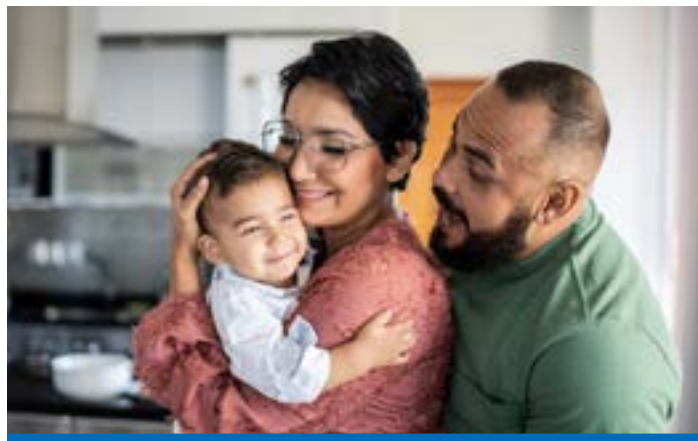
1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Combine scallions, celery, and corn in a small saucepan. Add just enough water to cover
3. Cover, bring to a boil and reduce heat to medium. Simmer for 5 minutes, until vegetables soften. Drain vegetables. Set aside to cool.
4. Combine avocado, cilantro, and beans in a large mixing bowl. Add cheese and salsa and mix.
5. When corn mixture has cooled slightly, add to avocado mixture.
6. In a large nonstick pan over medium heat, warm each tortilla for about 15 seconds on each side. Place each tortilla on a flat surface. Spoon 1/3 cup of the mixture into the center of the tortilla. Fold the top and bottom of the tortilla over the filling. Fold in the sides to make a closed packet.
7. Repeat with the remaining tortillas.
8. When all tortillas are wrapped, continue heating in the oven for 5 minutes, until all are warm and cheese is melted.

### Nutritional information (per serving):

Calories	189	Cholesterol	0 g	Saturated fat	0 g
Total fat	3 g	Potassium	204 mg	Total fiber	3 g
Protein	8 g	Carbohydrates	34 g	Sodium	257 mg

*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet.*

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## Care Management Program

- Toll-free phone number: **800-881-9227**
- Find information on the My health page  
**[www.HumanaMilitary.com/dm](http://www.HumanaMilitary.com/dm)**



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## Resources



Humana Military is here to help you on your health journey. Do you have a new diagnosis affecting your heart or circulatory system? Do you just want to know what else you can do to manage your condition? Did you start a new medication? We have resources to support you.

First, there are online resources you can use to manage your health, including videos and live, web-based events. Also, consider working with a disease management clinician for your heart and vascular health. To learn more about this free program, or to join, call Humana Military at 800-881-9227. Your dedicated clinician can help you set up some health goals to better manage your condition. As always, don't forget to routinely check in with your provider, and take all medications as instructed. Look forward to a healthier you by keeping your health under control.

