

# HEART FAILURE DISEASE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

## Welcome to Better Health

TRICARE East offers disease management programs to assist beneficiaries with managing chronic diseases to improve their health. Our team partners with beneficiaries and their clinicians to identify problems, establish goals, and monitor progress through regular follow-up care.

We are excited to welcome you to our heart failure disease management program. The program is offered to you at no cost and participation is not required.

This booklet provides you with some information about heart failure and can help with understanding your condition and identifying and managing your symptoms.

Please visit our website at [www.tricare.mil/eastdm](http://www.tricare.mil/eastdm) or call 800-881-9227 for more information about heart failure and our disease management initiative.

## Controlling Your Heart Failure

1. Schedule and keep regular appointments with your doctor.
2. Do not smoke.
3. Lose weight if you are overweight.
4. Follow your treatment/medication plan and adopt healthy lifestyle habits.




**EAST REGION**

[www.tricare.mil/eastdm](http://www.tricare.mil/eastdm)

**An important note about TRICARE program information:** At the time of publication, this information is current. It is important to remember that TRICARE policies and benefits are governed by public law and federal regulations. Changes to TRICARE programs are continually made as public law and/or federal regulations are amended. TRICARE is administered in the East region by Humana Military. TRICARE is a registered trademark of the Department of Defense, Defense Health Agency. All rights reserved. XBAF0325-A


# 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. 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

## 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:

- **Blood tests:** Checks for important substances such as sodium and potassium
- **Chest X-ray:** Determines if the heart is enlarged or if there is congestion in the lungs
- **Electrocardiogram:** Measures the electrical impulses in the heart
- **Echocardiography:** Uses sound waves to examine the heart's structure and motion
- **MUGA scan:** Dye is injected into a vein, then pictures of the heart are taken to measure how much blood it pumps with each beat
- **Exercise stress test:** Records the heart's activity during exercise

## WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT IF I HAVE HEART FAILURE?

 Patients with early stage heart failure may be able to receive treatment and make lifestyle changes that will slow the progression of the disease. With changes, patients may be able to eliminate some symptoms and improve the quality and length of their lives.

Other patients will have progressive symptoms despite treatment and lifestyle changes. Over time, shortness of breath may worsen until it is present all the time. Treatment may help reduce the symptoms but may not eliminate them.

As heart failure advances, complications such as irregular heartbeat may develop. Heart failure is a long-term condition and may worsen suddenly. Sudden worsening of heart failure requires emergency treatment.



HOW WILL I KNOW IF MY HEART FAILURE IS EARLY STAGE OR ADVANCED?

Talk with your doctor and ask questions about your concerns. Your doctor will be able to explain your unique disease process and address any other complications caused by other diseases (co-morbidity) you may have.

Heart failure is often classified according to symptoms using the classification system below. Your doctor may refer to this classification in the course of your care.

New York Heart Association Heart Failure Classification System	
Class I	<b>Physical activity is not limited:</b> Ordinary physical activity does not cause undue fatigue, heart palpitations, trouble breathing, or chest pain.
Class II	<b>Some limitations on physical activity:</b> The patient is comfortable at rest, but ordinary activity causes fatigue, heart palpitations, shortness of breath, or chest pain.
Class III	<b>Marked limitations on physical activity:</b> The patient is comfortable at rest, but most activities cause fatigue, shortness of breath, heart palpitations, and chest pain.
Class IV	<b>All physical activity causes symptoms to worsen:</b> Symptoms are present even at rest.

## WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP CONTROL MY HEART FAILURE?



Schedule and keep regular appointments with your doctor. Other diseases (co-morbidities) may play a role in progression. It is important for you to tell your doctor if you are being seen by other physicians for other health reasons. Learn to talk openly and honestly to your doctor about symptoms or changes in your condition so he or she can help you.

Successful treatment depends on your willingness to get involved in managing your condition.

Weigh yourself at the same time each morning, preferably before breakfast and after urinating. Notify your doctor if you gain three or more pounds in one day, five or more pounds in one week, or whatever amount your doctor told you to report.

Ask your doctor about getting a yearly flu vaccine and a one-time pneumonia vaccine. These will guard against illnesses that could put more stress on your heart.

You can help control your heart failure by adopting healthy lifestyle habits. Change is not easy, but don't give up if you are not able to make all the changes. Set realistic goals for yourself and start today. Join a support group for people with heart failure and other heart conditions if you would find it helpful.

## 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.





# Healthy Lifestyle Recommendations

You can help control your heart failure 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 (comorbidities) 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. 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.

## 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.





## 7. Get your blood pressure checked regularly:



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. 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 for women/two per day for men 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.

## 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.tricare.mil/eastdm](http://www.tricare.mil/eastdm): Select relevant topic, manage my health, my health and then select the relevant topic.
- [www.medlineplus.gov](http://www.medlineplus.gov): This website provides information on stress and many other health topics.