

# How Can I Live With Heart Failure?

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There are about 5 million Americans living with congestive heart failure today. In fact, it's one of the most common reasons people 65 and older go into the hospital. Fortunately, heart failure can be treated. Getting good medical care, following doctor's orders and learning about heart failure will help you lead a comfortable life.

You can help by taking your medicine as your doctor tells you, and by following your eating and exercise plans.



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## What medicine might I take?

Here are some examples:

1. **ACE Inhibitor**—lowers blood pressure and decreases the heart's workload.
2. **Diuretic**—helps your body get rid of extra water and sodium.
3. **Beta-blocker**—lowers blood pressure and slows heart rate.
4. **Digoxin**—helps your heart pump better.
5. **Vasodilator**—lowers blood pressure and opens and relaxes blood vessels.

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## What will help me get better?

- Visit the doctor and follow his or her advice.
- Read food labels and avoid foods high in salt or sodium.
- Start an aerobic exercise plan as your doctor advises.
- Keep up your interests and be upbeat!

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## My doctor's advice

Ask your doctor to fill in the blanks with recommendations that will help you recover.

Medicine Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

Diet Notes: Example: No salt allowed \_\_\_\_\_

Exercise Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

## What should I watch out for?

Tell your doctor right away if...

- You gain 3 or more pounds in a day or so.
- You see that your feet, ankles or other parts of your body are puffy.
- It's hard to breathe.
- You can't do what you could do the day before.
- You have "the flu."
- You get a fever.
- You have chest pain.

## How can I learn more?

1. Talk to your doctor, nurse or other health-care professionals. If you have heart disease or have had a stroke, members of your family also may be at higher risk. It's very important for them to make changes now to lower their risk.
2. Call 1-800-AHA-USA1 (1-800-242-8721), or visit [americanheart.org](http://americanheart.org) to learn more about heart disease.
3. For more information on stroke, call 1-888-4-STROKE (1-888-478-7653) or visit us online at [StrokeAssociation.org](http://StrokeAssociation.org).

We have many other fact sheets and educational booklets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk, manage disease or care for a loved one.

Knowledge is power, so *Learn and Live!*

## What are the Warning Signs of Heart Attack and Stroke?

Warning Signs of Heart Attack:

Some heart attacks are sudden and intense, but most of them start slowly with mild pain or discomfort with one or more of these symptoms:

- Chest discomfort
- Discomfort in other areas of the upper body
- Shortness of breath with or without chest discomfort
- Other signs including breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea or lightheadedness

Warning Signs of Stroke:

- Sudden weakness or numbness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body
- Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding
- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes
- Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination
- Sudden, severe headache with no known cause

Learn to recognize a stroke. Time lost is brain lost.

Call 9-1-1... Get to a hospital immediately if you experience signs of a heart attack or stroke!

## Do you have questions or comments for your doctor or nurse?

- Take a few minutes to write your own questions for the next time you see your healthcare provider. For example:

How can my family help me?

Should I stay in bed?