



# Heart failure

While “heart failure” is a frightening term, it is very common. It refers to a reduced ability of the heart to pump blood to the body. Heart failure affects almost six million Americans.



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Balanced information for better care

# The symptoms of heart failure

Heart failure refers to a limitation in the heart's ability to pump blood through the body.

The heart's pumping problem can cause fluid to back up into the lungs, causing **shortness of breath**.

This is often worse with exercise or when lying flat.

If the fluid backs up into the body, it can cause **swelling of the legs or abdomen**. The increase in fluid may also cause an **increase in weight**. Heart failure can also reduce your energy, making you **feel more tired**.

Most people with heart failure can be helped to feel much better—and to live longer.

## What can you do about heart failure?

- **Eat a healthy diet.**
- **Stay active.**
- **Take prescribed medications.**
- **Stop smoking.**
- **Avoid alcohol and reduce caffeine.**

## Lower the salt in your diet.

Eat a heart healthy diet that is low in salt (sodium). To reduce salt in your diet:

- Eat fresh or frozen vegetables.
- Avoid canned or highly processed foods.
- Review the nutrition label for sodium content—you'll often be surprised. Avoid high-sodium products.
- Cook meals at home when possible. Restaurant foods, especially fast foods, are loaded with salt.
- Keep serving sizes modest.
- Don't automatically add salt at the table.

Amount Per Serving	
<b>Calories</b>	200
	Calories from Fat 120
% Daily Value*	
<b>Total Fat</b>	15g <b>20%</b>
Saturated Fat	5g <b>28%</b>
Trans Fat	3g
<b>Cholesterol</b>	30mg <b>10%</b>
<b>Sodium</b>	650mg <b>28%</b>
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b>	30g <b>10%</b>
Dietary Fiber	0g <b>0%</b>
Sugars	5g
<b>Protein</b>	5g
Vitamin A	5%
Calcium	15%
Vitamin C	2%
Iron	5%

\*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your Daily Values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.

	Calories	2,000	2,500
Total Fat	Less than	65g	80g
Sat Fat	Less than	20g	25g
Cholesterol	Less than	300mg	300mg
Sodium	Less than	2,400mg	2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate		300mg	375mg
Dietary Fiber		25g	30g

*Be sure to review nutrition labels for sodium content.*



## Get up and get moving.

Many patients with heart failure can benefit from an exercise program. Talk to your health care provider about how much exercise is right for you.

## Keep track of your medications.

- Write down a list of all the medications you take.
- Know why you are prescribed a medication.
- If you have several medications, set up a schedule to remember when to take each.
- Use a pillbox or other tool to help you remember when to take your medications or set an alarm or a reminder for when you need to take your medications each day.
- Take your medications as directed.

If you are unable to take a medication due to side effects or cost, speak with your health care provider about an alternative.

## Call your health care provider if:

- your weight goes up
- you have shortness of breath
- you get lightheaded or dizzy
- you have swelling around your ankles
- you have other worsening or new symptoms

Sometimes worsening heart failure can be managed at home by having your health care provider adjust your medications, but only if you keep in close touch.



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## Want to know more?

Visit our website at [AlosaHealth.org/modules/heart-failure](https://www.AlosaHealth.org/modules/heart-failure) for resources from:

- American Heart Association
  - Heart Failure Society of America
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**These are general recommendations only; specific clinical decisions should be made by the treating physician based on an individual patient's clinical condition.**

[AlosaHealth.org](http://AlosaHealth.org)



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