

# More Information



Heart & Stroke – Living with Heart Failure

More Information

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Learn more about heart failure at  
**[heartandstroke.ca/heartfailure](http://heartandstroke.ca/heartfailure)**

# Depression

Depression can affect anyone but people with heart failure are more likely to become depressed. For every 10 people with heart failure, 5 to 7 will likely experience depression.

## What is depression?

It is a medical condition where a person feels sad, loses interest in daily activities, withdraws from people, and feels hopeless about the future.

Depression is different from grief, sadness related to an event, or low energy.

## How can a health care professional tell a person has depression?

**You must have a number of the following signs most of the day, every day for at least 2 weeks:**

- Constantly feeling sad for no reason
- Feeling hopeless, guilty, or worthless
- Little or no interest in people or activities you use to enjoy
- Feeling really tired or low on energy
- Sleeping too much or not enough
- Feeling like you are speeding up or slowing down
- Unplanned changes in your weight (weight loss or weight gain)
- Changes in your appetite
- Having trouble thinking, concentrating, or remembering
- Having trouble making decisions
- Thinking about hurting yourself or about dying

## How can depression affect your heart failure?

Depression can make your heart failure worse. If you are depressed, you will find it harder to do the things you need to do to manage your heart failure (such as exercising, eating well, limiting fluids, and taking your medicines as directed).

## What causes depression?

Depression may be caused by one factor or a number of factors. Some factors that might cause depression include:

- An imbalance in the natural chemicals in the brain
- A heart condition
- A chronic health condition such as anemia or hypothyroid
- Difficult life events such as:
  - Death of a loved one
  - Divorce
  - Loss of a job
  - Childbirth
- Using too much alcohol or drugs
- Family history of depression



### Depression is not caused by a personal weakness.

Sometimes when people feel very depressed and overwhelmed, they start to think about hurting themselves. If you have started to make a plan to hurt yourself, go to the nearest emergency room right away.

## How do you know if you are depressed?

Ask yourself the following question (Choose the number that most reflects your feeling over the last two weeks.)

**Over the last two weeks, how much have I been bothered by feeling sad, down, or uninterested in life?**

0    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9  
(None)    (A little)    (Moderate)    (Severe)

## When should you get help?

### If you scored 3 or lower

- You are probably coping pretty well. Your feelings of depression are probably not interfering with your life too much.

### If you scored 4 to 6

- You are probably **mildly to moderately** depressed. Talk to your family doctor. Try some of the ideas on this page to help you with your depression.

### If you scored between 7 to 9

- You are probably **severely** depressed. See your family doctor or a mental health professional right away.

## Some ideas on how to manage depression

### Set small goals

- Set small self-care goals (taking a shower, taking a walk, eating well-balanced meal)
- Set small household goals (doing the dishes, paying some bills, take care of business you have been avoiding)

### Socialize and have fun

- Reach out to friends and family.
- Make social plans and go even if you "don't feel like it".
- Make time for pleasant activities. You may need to gently force yourself to do these things. Don't wait until you want to!



### Watch out for negative thinking

- Try to be aware of your thoughts. (Negative thinking is very common with depression.)
- Ask yourself what you would say to a friend who had that negative thought.
- Try to be kinder to yourself.

### Problem solving

- Identify and define problems.
- Make a list of possible actions to address the problem.
- Identify pros and cons for each action.
- Pick the best action and try it out.
- Think about how it went.

## How is depression treated?

It is essential to get medical treatment. Some effective treatments include:

- Talk Therapy – especially Cognitive Behavioural Therapy is helpful for people with heart conditions.
- Medicines to improve mood.
- Lifestyle changes such as exercise and proper sleep.

# Stress

# What is stress?

Stress is your body's reaction to an event or situation (real or imagined). Stress is not so much what happens to you, but how you respond to a situation or event. Too much stress is hard on your mind, body, and especially your heart.

While stress is a part of everyday life, too much stress increases a person's chances of getting or worsening heart disease. High levels of stress or stress over long periods can cause:

- Increased blood pressure
  - Increased higher cholesterol
  - Increased chances of having a heart attack or stroke



# What are stressors?

A stressor is any situation or event that triggers your body's stress response. Stressors are different for each person.

## **Examples of stressors:**

- Having a new diagnosis of heart failure
  - Limits in physical ability
  - Having chronic pain
  - Dealing with a number of health conditions
  - Conflict in a relationship
  - Being isolated from friends and family
  - Dealing with the death or illness of a loved one
  - Changes at work
  - Money worries



## How do you know if you are stressed?

Ask yourself the following question (Choose the number that most reflects your feeling over the last two weeks.)

**Over the last two weeks, how much have I been bothered by feeling anxious, worried, nervous, or tense?**

0    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9  
(None)                  (A little)                (Moderate)              (Severe)

## If you scored 4 or lower

- You are probably coping pretty well with your stress. If you feel you would like more help than this sheet gives you, please talk to someone you trust.

**If you scored between 5 and 8**

- It would be good for you to talk to your health care provider or a mental health professional about how you are feeling.

## If you scored 8 or higher

- You are very stressed and need to get help right away.



Sometimes when people feel very stressed and overwhelmed, they start to think about hurting themselves. If you have started to make a plan to hurt yourself, go to the nearest emergency room right away.

## What might happen if you have too much stress

### How stress can affect your thinking

- Trouble concentrating, short attention span, easily distracted
- Poor judgement
- Lapse in memory
- Difficulty making simple decisions
- Brooding over problems
- Imagining the worst
- Confusion

### How stress can affect your behaviour

- Crying
- Fidgeting, and pacing
- Having more arguments
- Drinking more coffee, tea, cola
- Withdrawing from others
- Overeating or loss of appetite
- Smoking
- Drinking alcohol
- Sexual difficulties

### How stress can affect your emotions

- Feeling helpless and frustrated
- Feeling overwhelmed by your life
- Feeling anxious, or worried
- Feeling irritable, hostile, or angry
- Feeling down, depressed, or hopeless

### How stress can affect your body

- Headache
- Knots in your stomach, feeling sick to your stomach
- Restlessness
- Sweating
- Increased heart rate and blood pressure
- Rapid, shallow breathing
- Muscle tension in jaw, neck, or shoulders
- Tremors in hands or legs
- Tingling or numbness in fingertips
- Trouble sleeping, feeling tired all the time



## Some ideas on how to manage your stress

- Practice deep breathing and other forms of relaxation such as:
  - Meditation, yoga, and stretching
- Call a friend.
- Maintain healthy habits such as:
  - Exercising daily to get rid of tension.
  - Eating a healthy diet to nourish your body.
  - Getting a full night's sleep.
- Limit what you take on. It is okay to say 'no'.
- Be assertive.

- Make small changes to organize your life.
- Use a calendar and a 'to do' list to help you manage your time.
- Look for the good in self or others.
- When a worry enters your mind, ask yourself if it is a problem you can solve. If the answer is yes, set aside some time to problem solve. If the answer is no, let the worry go!
- Have as much fun as possible. You deserve it!

Never use alcohol, tobacco, or street drugs to help you manage your anxiety

## **Some ideas on how to manage your stress**

### **Workbook**

- Positive Coping with Health Conditions – A Self-Care Workbook at [www.comh.ca/pchc/](http://www.comh.ca/pchc/)

Choose to download the complete workbook or selected excerpts from the workbook such as 'Managing Worry' or 'Relaxation'.

For more information on Stress, check these resources:

- Bounce Back Program:  
[www.mentalhealthhelpline.ca](http://www.mentalhealthhelpline.ca)

Help us make this guide better!

Please fill out the brief survey at the  
back of the book or complete it online at  
**[heartandstroke.ca/feedback](http://heartandstroke.ca/feedback)**

# Anxiety

## What is anxiety?

Everyone experiences anxiety at times. It is our body's natural response to a threat (sometimes called the 'fight-flight-freeze' response). Our body releases adrenalin in response to a real danger or to something that feels threatening or dangerous. Our heart rate increases and blood shifts to our large muscles. All this prepares our body to respond to the danger by fighting, fleeing (flight), or freezing.

Normally, anxiety goes away once the threat is gone. Anxiety can become a problem when a person continues to have worrying thoughts or reacts as if there is a danger when no real danger exists.

## What causes anxiety?

It is different for every person. Any number of situations can cause you to feel anxious, worried, or tense.

### There are things that can make your anxiety response worse:

- Medical conditions such as thyroid problems, heart or lung problems, seizure disorders
- Stopping certain medicines on your own (without your doctor knowing)
- Being dependent on or addicted to alcohol, cocaine, amphetamines, tranquilizers, or heroin
- Always telling yourself the worst will happen

### You are more likely to feel anxiety if:

- You have a family history of problems with anxiety.
- You have an imbalance of certain chemicals in your brain.

## What are the signs of anxiety?

Many people do not recognize what they are feeling as being signs of anxiety. Instead, they think something is physically 'wrong' with them.

Anxiety can affect your body, your thoughts, and your behaviour.

### Possible body responses

- Fast, pounding heart
- Rapid breathing, shortness of breath
- Chest pain or discomfort
- Sweating
- Feeling dizzy or lightheaded
- Dry mouth, nausea, stomach upset
- Pale
- Muscle tension
- Trembling, shaking
- Numbness and tingling
- Hot or cold flashes



### Possible thoughts

- Having frightening dreams or thoughts
- Overestimating the chances something bad will happen
- Magnifying how bad the situation is or how bad a future situation will be
- Not believing you can cope
- Having trouble concentrating or making decisions

### Possible behaviours

- Using alcohol or drugs to lessen the anxiety
- Needing others to reassure you all the time
- Needing to be with a 'safe' person
- Staying away from certain places, activities or people

## When should you get help?

Ask yourself the following question (Choose the number that most reflects your feelings.)

**Over the last two weeks, how much have I been bothered by feeling anxious, worried, nervous, or tense?**

0    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9  
(None)    (A little)    (Moderate)    (Severe)

**If you scored 3 or lower:**

- You are probably coping pretty well with your anxiety. If you feel you would like more help than this sheet gives you, please talk to someone you trust.

**If you scored between 4 and 7:**

- It would be good for you to talk to your health care provider or a mental health professional about how you are feeling.
- To find a mental health professional, contact the Canadian Mental Health Association at [www.cmha.ca](http://www.cmha.ca)

**If you scored 8 or higher:**

You are probably very anxious. See your family doctor or a mental health professional as soon as possible.

## Some ideas on how to manage your anxiety

- Be aware how you experience anxiety.
- Identify things that trigger your anxiety.
  - Ask yourself “Is this really a threat or a danger?”
- Ask yourself if your worry is something you have some control over. If it is, try to resolve it. If it isn’t, let it go.
- Practice deep breathing and other forms of relaxation such as:
  - Meditation, yoga, and stretching, praying, reading, going for a walk, listening to music
- Eat a healthy well balanced diet.

## How can anxiety affect my heart failure?

The increased heart rate and blood pressure adds stress on your heart.

Anxiety needs energy. Anxiety can increase your blood sugar and cholesterol. Both can make your heart failure worse.

Anxiety can make it hard to sleep, leaving you feeling more tired.

## What can you do when you have mild anxiety?

It is not unusual for someone with a health condition such as heart failure to feel scared, worried, or tense. Included below are some ideas to help you deal with your anxiety.

For more detailed help on how to manage your anxiety, see the resources on the next page.

Sometimes when people feel very anxious and overwhelmed, they start to think about hurting themselves. If you have started to make a plan to hurt yourself, go to the nearest emergency room right away.

- Get a good night sleep.
- Do not drink caffeine close to bed time.
- Reduce any stress in your life.
  - Reduce things that stimulate your body:
    - Reduce the amount of caffeine you drink (coffee, tea, colas) in a day.
  - Do not smoke cigarettes.
  - Set a routine for doing daily activities
  - Use a calendar and a ‘to do’ list to help you manage your time.
  - If you are having a bad day, talk to someone you can trust.

Never use alcohol, tobacco, or street drugs to help you manage your anxiety

## **How do we know when anxiety is a problem?**

Sometimes anxiety and worry can become so severe that a person develops an anxiety disorder. A doctor or mental health professional can tell if you are suffering from an anxiety disorder by asking you a number of questions.

Sometimes blood tests are done to see if a medical condition is making the anxiety worse.

## **How is moderate to severe anxiety treated?**

Anxiety disorders respond well to treatment.

Treatment can include:

- Counselling
- Support group
- Behaviour therapy (focusing on thinking and behaviour)
- Exposure therapy (focusing on facing the situation in a safe environment)
- Medications to treat any chemical imbalance in your brain

## **Some ideas on how to manage your anxiety**

### **Workbook**

- Positive Coping with Health Conditions – A Self-Care Workbook at [www.comh.ca/pchc/](http://www.comh.ca/pchc/) Choose to download the complete workbook or selected excerpts from the workbook such as 'Managing Worry' or 'Relaxation'.

### **Books**

- *Coping with Anxiety: 10 Simple Ways to Relieve Anxiety, Fear, and Worry* by Edmund Bourne and Lorna Garano (2013)
- *The Anxiety And Phobia Workbook* by Edmund Bourne (2010)

More Information

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# Tips for Travelling When you Have Heart Failure

With some planning, people with heart failure can travel safely.

## Planning for travel

- Talk with your healthcare provider before you commit to any trip, especially if you have a pacemaker or implanted cardioverter defibrillator (ICD).
- Make sure your immunizations are up to date.
- Buy travel health insurance, especially when travelling outside of Canada and even if only for a day. Make sure it covers pre-existing illnesses.
- Buy cancellation insurance on flights and bookings, in case you have a sudden change in your health.
- When flying, especially outside of Canada, you might need a travel letter from your doctor explaining why you need to travel with all your medications. Check with your travel agent or airline.
- Know where to go to get medical help when you get there by finding out before you leave. Check to see if there is a hospital or medical clinic nearby.
- Pack a cell phone. Check with your cell phone provider to make sure you have coverage in the area you are travelling.
- If possible, weigh yourself while you are traveling.
- If travelling to a different time zone, ask your healthcare provider if you should adjust your medication schedule.
- Consider wearing a Medical Alert bracelet or necklace.

- Carry copies of your medical information such as:
  - Results of recent blood tests
  - A list of health and medical problems
  - Names and contact phone numbers of your healthcare providers
  - A list of all your current medications
- Take enough of each medication to last the whole trip plus extra, in case of an emergency or a travel delay.
- Keep all your medications in the packaging supplied by the pharmacy.
- Consider asking your pharmacist to put your medications into 'blister packs' so you don't have to travel with all your original containers.
- Make sure each medication name is clearly marked. (This is very important when crossing borders.)



## When not to travel

### It is best to stay home if:

- Your healthcare provider has advised you not to travel.
- You have recently come home from being in the hospital.
- Your doctor has changed one or more of your medications, such as a change in dose or how often you take it.
- You cannot get travel health insurance.
- You notice increased signs of heart failure (shortness of breath, weight gain, fatigue, cough, swelling in your feet or belly area, or dizziness).

## Travelling with a heart device

- If you have a heart device (a pacemaker or an implanted cardioverter defibrillator), check with your healthcare provider, especially if your device is being monitored remotely.
  - If you have just had a heart device inserted, wait until your first follow-up appointment to find out when it is safe for you to travel.
  - Ask your doctor for a copy of your heart device instructions in the language of the country you are travelling to.
  - Ask for a recent print out of settings for your heart device.
  - If you have an implanted cardioverter defibrillator (ICD), ask what you should do if you get a shock while away.
- Keep your cell phone at least 6 inches away from your heart device.
- Always carry your heart device identification card with you.
- When going through security:
  - Show your heart device identification card before going through the metal detectors.
  - Ask for a 'hand check' instead of a wand metal detector check. A wand metal detector could momentarily change the settings on your heart device.
  - Tell security using wand metal detectors they can only pass over your heart device once every 5 or more seconds.
  - Know your heart device is going to set off an alarm when walking through an archway metal detector; you may need a 'hand check' as well.

## During your travels

- When sitting for long periods, get up or get out for a walk every 2 hours.
- Whenever you have to check your luggage, carry all your medications with you in a carry-on bag.
- Take your medications on schedule.
- It is best not to buy any medications in other countries. Ingredients can vary from what is in the medication from Canada.
- Be careful you don't drink too much fluid. When in hot climates or when socializing, people tend to drink more.
- Watch your portion size for both meals and snacks. Eating more than normal can cause bloating, an upset stomach, and indigestion.
- Eat your largest meal either at lunch or earlier in the afternoon. Have a light dinner or early evening snack.
- Eating out usually means foods high in sodium. Whenever you can:
  - Ask for "no added salt".
  - Choose low calorie and low salt meals and snacks.
  - Say "no thanks" to sauces, gravies, and prepared foods.
  - Make your own low salt meals.



**Plan ahead. Travel safe. Enjoy!**

**Did you know?** It is safe to go through archway metal detectors, body scanners, and retail store anti-theft equipment with a heart device.

# Caring for someone with heart failure. Taking care of yourself.

If you give care to someone with heart failure, you could find yourself facing new responsibilities. It can be both rewarding and challenging to be a ‘caregiver’. A ‘caregiver’ is anyone who gives help and care to another person in need.



## Signs of caregiver stress

When you are focused on caring for someone else, you might not realize your own health is suffering. At times, you might feel overwhelmed, physically or emotionally. This is called ‘caregiver stress’.

### Watch for these signs of caregiver stress:

- Feeling tired all the time
- Having trouble sleeping
- Gaining or losing a lot of weight
- Feeling guilty, like you are not doing enough
- Feeling overwhelmed and irritable
- Having conflicts with the person you care for
- Having conflicts with family members
- Feeling you don’t have time for yourself or to be with others
- Having no interest in doing activities you used to enjoy
- Feeling emotional and moody, maybe crying often
- Worrying about having enough money now and for the future
- Using substances to help manage your feelings such as smoking more, drinking more alcohol, taking medications to help sleep or improve your mood, or taking illegal drugs

## Tips to prevent caregiver stress

Too much stress can harm your health, especially if you care for someone for a long time. Here are some ways to help prevent and manage caregiver stress.

### Ask for help and accept help when offered.

- Look to others to help share the care.
- Make a list of ways others can help you such as pick up groceries or cook a meal.



### Set health goals for yourself.

- Make time to be physically active most days of the week.
- Make and eat healthy meals and snacks.
- Get enough sleep, even if it means taking a nap during the day.
- Take time to relax each day. Find a place in your home where you can have a few moments to relax, close your eyes, and do some deep breathing.
- Do things you enjoy.
- Give yourself a break. Take some time away from being a caregiver at least once a week.

## Tips to prevent caregiver stress

### Focus on what you can do.

- Be realistic about what you can and cannot do. You can't control everything.
- Don't be too hard on yourself. Your home might not be as clean as you would like it to be.
- If you feel like it, eat a healthy breakfast for dinner or eat leftovers three or four days in a row. No one cares.

### Seek support from family and friends.

- Make an effort to stay connected with family and friends.
- Share your feelings, worries, and concerns with someone you are comfortable talking with about your situation.



### Get connected with community supports.

- Rather than struggling on your own, take advantage of local resources for caregivers.
- Explore opportunities for support in the home from health services. Talk to your health care provider for information on what supports are available.

### Stay as strong and healthy as possible.

- Keep up with your own medical care.
- Get regular health checks. Make sure you tell your healthcare provider you are a caregiver.
- If you are feeling stressed, depressed, or unusually worried, the Heart & Stroke website has resources to help you.
- See your healthcare provider when you notice signs of caregiver stress or you feel really overwhelmed or depressed.

### Communicate with the person you are caring for.

- Talk with the person you are caring for about what would be helpful in giving care and helping to manage their heart failure.
- Help the person find ways that will work for them to do as much as possible on their own. This might include ways to remember when to take medications, to record daily weight, to keep track of fluids, to eat less salt, or to keep active.
- Agree on a plan of care so you don't feel like you are always telling or reminding.
- If the person is not doing what is needed to manage their health, talk to them about your worries or concerns. Remember you cannot make someone do something they do not want to do.
- Help the person prepare for medical appointments such as reviewing recent health and concerns, resting before the appointment, as well as taking all medications and a healthy snack to the appointment.

- If you can, go with the person to medical appointments. Take notes. Help communicate health concerns but be careful not to answer for the person. You are there to clarify what is going on at home.



**As a caregiver**, taking care of yourself is the most important, and most often forgotten, thing you can do.

When you take care of yourself, the person you give care to benefits too.

# Learning to Live with Heart Failure

You can do it! You can make changes in your life to help you feel better and stay healthy. This resource gives you tips for daily life and answers common questions.

## Conserve your energy

- Rest at least 1 hour every day.
- Aim for balance.
  - Balance activity with rest.
  - Balance hard activities with easy activities.
  - Do activities when you feel your best.
- Plan ahead.
  - Plan your chores and daily activities ahead of time.
  - Space them out throughout the day and week. You do not have to do everything in one day.
  - Whenever you can, sit to work or do daily chores.
  - Keep things you use the most within reach.
  - Prepare bigger meals and freeze portions to save preparing meals another day.
- Use things that help conserve energy.
  - Choose clothes that have zippers instead of buttons. Make sure the zipper is in the front and not the back.
  - Use long-handled tools to make reaching easier.
  - If needed, use a walker, shower chair and bedside toilet.
  - Choose light weight house hold or kitchen items. For example, choose aluminum pots and pans instead of cast iron.



- Avoid things that drain energy, such as:
  - Doing chores or activities right after you eat
  - Doing intense physical activity
  - Lifting, stretching, or any other strenuous arm movement
- Ask for help.
  - Ask those you live with to share in doing the daily tasks and household chores.
  - Ask family and friends to help out.

## Get enough sleep

- Practice good sleep habits.
  - Have a regular bedtime.
  - Relax before bedtime.
  - If you cannot get to sleep within 30 minutes, get up and read or watch TV.
  - Only use your bed for sleeping and intimacy. This means get out of bed to read or watch TV.
- If you get short of breath lying down, prop yourself up with pillows.
- If you get up often to go to the toilet, talk to your health care provider. Your medications might need adjusting.

## Take care of your physical health

- Keep in contact with your health care team.
- Getting sick can be deadly when you have heart failure.
  - Get a flu shot every year.
  - Get a pneumonia shot.



## Take care of your emotional health

Many people find it hard to do everything needed to manage their heart failure. Don't hide these feelings. Talk to your health care provider. If you are feeling stressed, depressed or unusually worried, our website has resources to help you visit [heartandstroke.ca/heart/conditions/heart-failure](http://heartandstroke.ca/heart/conditions/heart-failure).

### Can I drive?

Whether or not you drive depends on how you are feeling. Generally, people can drive as long as their heart failure is under control. However, the Motor Vehicle Act defines when a person is or is not medically fit to drive. If your health care provider feels your health affects your ability to drive safely, it must be reported to the Superintendent of Motor Vehicles. You might have restrictions on your driver's licence or have your licence removed. It is all about public safety.

### Can I work?

It depends on your overall health, how you are managing your heart failure, and the type of work. For some people, working might be helpful, but for others it might not be good. Every person is different. Talk to your health care provider about what is right for you.

If your health care provider says you can work, you might be able to start as soon as your signs of heart failure are under control, or you might have to gradually build up to doing all aspects of the work.

### Benefits of working:

- Helps you get into a daily routine
- Helps you feel better and improves your mood
- Lessens money worries by having an income



## What about having sex?

Some people worry about whether it is safe to have sex when they have heart failure. Once your signs of heart failure are under control, you should be able to have an active and safe sex life. Human touch and good sexual relations are part of a healthy life.

When you have sex, it can take a lot of energy, both emotionally and physically. The physical energy is like climbing 20 steps in 10 seconds.

Sex should be fun and feel good:

- Wait at least 1 hour after eating.
- Do not drink alcohol before sex.
- Choose a time when you are rested and relaxed.
- Choose a comfortable place where it is not too hot or cold.
- Stop and rest if you get short of breath or feel uncomfortable.
- Find other ways to express love and affection.
- Don't get upset if you are not able to perform as you expected.
- Talk to your partner about how you feel.



Problems are possible. Your interest in sex might drop. You might get short of breath during sex. Men might have problems getting an erection. Problems can be a side effect of a medication or a sign your heart failure is getting worse. Talk to your health care provider about any problems having sex.

Remember there are other ways to express love and affection.

## How do I stay on track during special occasions?

Whether eating out or eating in, food for special occasions is more likely to be high in salt, especially sauces and gravies. Also, people tend to eat and drink more.

- Make healthy choices.
  - Choose food prepared with little or no salt.
  - Where possible, choose fresh vegetables and fruit.
- Plan big meals for midday.
- Pay special attention to your snacking and portion size.
- Watch your fluid intake.



## A word about...

### Drinking alcohol

Some alcohol can be helpful to a normal heart. However, sometimes even a small amount of alcohol can cause heart failure to get worse. Alcohol can weaken your heart muscle and increase your blood pressure, creating more work for your heart.

Ask your health care team if any amount of alcohol is okay for you.

### Smoking

Everyone knows smoking and using tobacco products damages your heart and lungs. But quitting is not easy. Your chances of quitting are much better if you ask for help.

Ask your health care team for:

- Help to quit smoking
- Ways to deal with second-hand smoke

To learn more about quitting smoking, check the website: [www.quitnow.ca](http://www.quitnow.ca)

## Future heart failure care

### Have the conversation with your family and healthcare provider

Heart failure is a condition that is not curable and gets worse over time. In the future, there could be a time when you might be too sick to consent to treatment offered by your healthcare provider or doctor. If this happens, your healthcare provider will look to your family for help with decisions about your care.

Planning now for the future can give you comfort knowing your family and healthcare provider knows what is important to you. It can also ease the stress for your family if they have to make medical decisions for you.

Learn more at [advancedcareplanning.ca](http://advancedcareplanning.ca)

More Information

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# Advanced Heart Failure Personal Action Plan

**Purpose:** To ensure all health care providers are aware how to care for me and my family during this stage of my life.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Signed (patient): \_\_\_\_\_

## What matters most to me:

Focus of Care & Collaborative Decisions	Person Responsible for Follow-up & Revision	Collaborative Actions/Approach
<b>Symptom Management – Psychological</b> [symptoms that make me feel sad or anxious and approaches that have been tried and/or are helpful]		
<b>Symptom Management – Physical or Body</b> [symptoms that are bothersome to me and approaches that have been tried and/or are helpful]		
<b>Social Care Needs</b> [include concerns about: finances, end of life legal planning, medication cost, transportation, access/cost for home support services, equipment, difficult family/caregiver situations, support network]		
<b>Spiritual Care Needs</b> [individual cultural or spiritual approaches that are important to me and my family]		
<b>My Wishes</b> [for future health care treatment, life support and life-prolonging medical interventions e.g. minimize pill burden or doesn't want invasive procedures] <input type="checkbox"/> Advance care plan completed <input type="checkbox"/> Palliative benefits in place		
<b>Device management:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/> ICD Deactivation discussion has taken place on [Date] _____ Decision: _____  [Include plan for deactivation eg. In device clinic or magnet at home, etc]		

Focus of Care & Collaborative Decisions	Person Responsible for Follow-up & Revision	Collaborative Actions/Approach
<b>Managing Activities</b> [Include energy conservation strategies; activities that are important for me to maintain]		
<b>Managing Diet</b> [Include types of foods that I enjoy or tolerate, include wishes around mealtime rituals, etc]		
<b>Supporting My Caregiver(s)</b> [Include things that are important to me and my family e.g. Pastoral care, sharing a bed or room, etc]		
<b>Ways to Support Me as a Person:</b>		
<b>Worries or Concerns I Have:</b>		
<b>Other Preferences:</b>		

## Contact Information for My Team

Family doctor/nurse practitioner: \_\_\_\_\_

Heart failure specialist/specialty team members: \_\_\_\_\_

My primary caregiver: \_\_\_\_\_

Health care contact: \_\_\_\_\_

Other providers who know me well: \_\_\_\_\_