

# GoToGuide: Heart Failure



Mended Hearts®



# GoToGuide Heart Failure



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If you've been diagnosed with heart failure, it's normal for you and your loved ones to be concerned.

Understanding heart failure and how it's treated can give you more control over your health.

The purpose of this GoTo Guide is to walk you through the steps to becoming an empowered patient so you can make the best decisions about your care that are right for you.

The steps to becoming an empowered patient are:

- **Step 1:** Take responsibility.
- **Step 2:** Educate yourself.
- **Step 3:** Know your rights.
- **Step 4:** Be part of the team.
- **Step 5:** Get information.
- **Step 6:** Voice your opinion.
- **Step 7:** Make informed decisions that are right for you.



# 7 STEPS TO BECOMING AN EMPOWERED PATIENT



## 1 Take responsibility.

By using this Guide, you are taking responsibility for your healthcare and taking the first step to becoming an empowered patient. In this Guide, you will receive valuable information along with tools and resources to help you on your journey with heart failure.



## 2 Educate yourself.

The first step to feeling empowered is to understand what a heart failure diagnosis means. Ask your doctor questions and read about your condition from reputable sources.



## 3 Know your rights.

Many patients feel they are at the mercy of the system and just need to do “what the doctor says.” While it is very important to follow your treatment plan, you also need to know your rights as a patient.



## 4 Be part of the team.

You know yourself better than anyone. Talk to your healthcare team about any questions, issues or concerns you may have, and keep your appointments.



## 5 Get information.

If you need medication, surgery or a device, you can never ask too many questions about it. Your doctor’s job is to help you feel confident about your treatment plan, so don’t be afraid to ask questions until you feel like you understand.



## 6 Voice your opinion.

Your voice matters. Speak up if you feel confused or uncomfortable with any course of action.

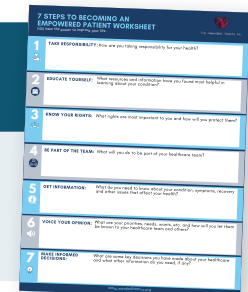


## 7 Make informed decisions that are right for you.

You might hear people talk about shared decision making. Shared decision making means that there is ongoing communication between the patient and the person providing care. What you want matters. Make sure you’re part of the conversation about your heart condition and actively involved in treatment option decisions.

## 7 STEPS WORKSHEET

Download and complete [this worksheet](#) to track your progress.







**STEP 1:**  
Take  
responsibility.





# What Is Heart Failure?

Heart failure doesn't mean that your heart has stopped working, but it does mean that your heart isn't pumping blood well.

While heart failure can't be cured, it can be treated. There are more than 6 million adults living with heart failure in the United States. Many are able to improve their quality of life through:



**medical treatment**



**healthy eating**



**symptom monitoring**



**exercise**

## HEART FAILURE

### What is HEART FAILURE?

A **PROBLEM** with **HOW YOUR HEART PUMPS**.

There are two main types of heart failure:

**REDUCED EJECTION FRACTION**  
The heart can't pump or squeeze enough blood out to the body.

**PRESERVED EJECTION FRACTION**  
The heart can't fill with enough blood.

**Ejection fraction** is a measure of how much blood your heart is pumping out with each beat.

### SYMPTOMS

Extreme tiredness or weakness

Rapid changes in weight

Feeling light-headed

Swelling in the ankles, feet, legs or tummy

Rapid or irregular heartbeat

Shortness of breath

Trouble breathing when lying down

**Over 6 million Americans** have heart failure

It is the **leading cause of hospitalization** for people 65+

### COMMON CAUSES

Coronary artery disease

Heart attack

Diabetes

High blood pressure

Heart rhythm disorders

- Heart inflammation
- Valve problems
- Congenital heart problems
- Obesity
- Some cancer treatments

For more information, visit [CardioSmart.org/HeartFailure](https://www.CardioSmart.org/HeartFailure)

[@ACCinTouch](#) #CardioSmart

Information provided for educational purposes only. Please talk to your health care professional about your specific health needs. To download or order posters on other topics, visit [CardioSmart.org/Posters](https://www.CardioSmart.org/Posters)



## **STEP 2:** Educate yourself.



At The Mended Hearts, Inc., we believe the saying, “Knowledge is power,” and we believe in empowered patients. Empowered patients take charge of their health and don’t let their disease or condition define them. Of course, there are always things you can’t change {for example, genetics that impact you negatively), but there are always things you *can* change too. When you educate yourself, you are better able to make informed decisions and find ways to help yourself feel better both physically and emotionally. You are also one step closer to becoming an empowered patient.

## Understanding Heart Failure

Heart failure happens when the heart muscle has become weak or stiff and can’t fill with blood. Heart failure can happen on the heart’s right side or left side, but most commonly it happens on both sides. Heart failure can take years to develop. It can also happen suddenly because of a heart event or illness.

### Left-Sided Heart Failure

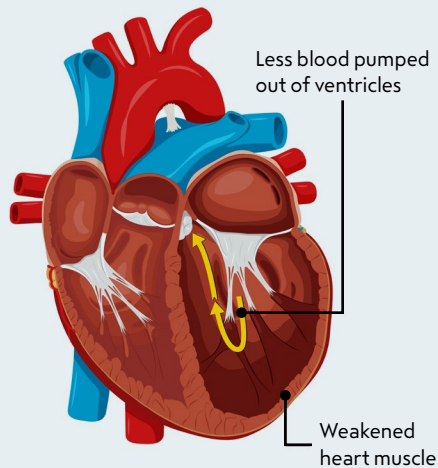
In a normal heart, the left ventricle, or bottom left chamber of the heart, pumps blood with oxygen to the body. When someone has left-sided heart failure, the left side of the heart isn’t functioning correctly, making it harder to get blood to the body.

Your doctor will measure how well your left ventricle is pumping blood to the body. This measurement is called **ejection fraction, or EF**.

## EJECTION FRACTION (EF)

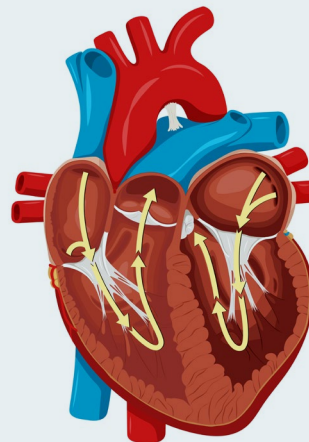
An ejection fraction (EF) describes the percentage of blood that the heart can pump out of the left ventricle during each heartbeat.

### Heart Failure with Reduced Ejection Fraction (HFrEF)



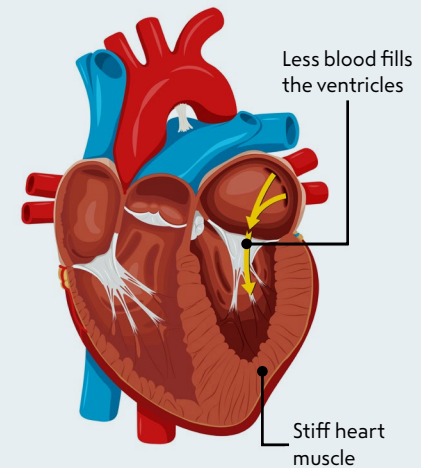
Ejection fraction 40% and below

### Normal Heart



Ejection fraction 50%–70% (not 100%)

### Heart Failure with Preserved Ejection Fraction (HFpEF)



Ejection fraction 50% or higher

## Right-Sided Heart Failure

Right-sided heart failure is usually caused by left-sided heart failure. The blood coming from the lungs to the heart becomes congested in the lungs and backs up into the right side of the heart, like a traffic

jam. This means the right ventricle can't pump well. When people have right-sided heart failure, fluid backing up in their veins may cause swelling in the legs, feet and sometimes the belly.



## HEART FAILURE IS WIDESPREAD



550,000 new cases of heart failure are diagnosed in the U.S. each year.



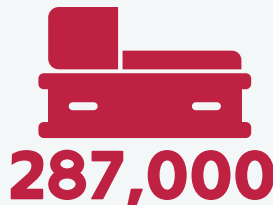
Congestive heart failure affects people of all ages.



African-Americans are 1.5 times more likely to develop heart failure than Caucasians.



Heart failure is responsible for 11 million doctor visits each year.

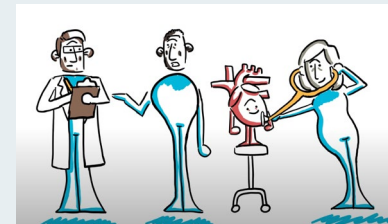


Unmanaged heart failure contributes to about 287,000 deaths a year.

### Congestive Heart Failure (CHF)

Congestive heart failure is a serious form of heart failure that happens when fluid backs up in the veins, causing congestion in the body. Congestive heart failure may cause fluid to back up in the lungs, causing shortness of breath, even when a person is lying down. Other symptoms include swelling in the legs, feet, ankles and/or in the belly area. People with symptoms of congestive heart failure should get medical help right away.

### LEARN MORE



Watch this informative video from the American College of Cardiology on the basics of heart failure.

# Causes of Heart Failure

Heart failure can be caused by many conditions, including:

- **Coronary artery disease (CAD)** is the most common form of heart disease and happens when the arteries to the heart narrow because of fatty deposits (plaque).
- **Cardiomyopathy** is a disease that affects the heart muscle and makes it harder for the heart to pump blood to the body. There are two main types of cardiomyopathy — dilated cardiomyopathy (DCM) and hypertrophic cardiomyopathy (HCM).
- Some people are born with **congenital heart defects**, problems in the heart's

structure that may lead to heart failure.

- **Heart attacks** occur when blood flowing to the heart becomes blocked in the coronary arteries.
- **High blood pressure** means the force of blood against the artery walls is too high, straining the heart and other organs.





- **Heart valve damage** can be caused by heart attacks or other heart problems.
- **Cardiac amyloidosis** is a form of cardiomyopathy that occurs when protein deposits cause the heart muscle to stiffen. See the box to the right for more information on this condition.
- An **irregular heartbeat** is when the heart beats too fast, too slow or out of normal rhythm.
- The low levels of oxygen caused by **severe lung disease** can trigger right-sided heart failure.
- **Diabetes** can increase the risk of heart failure and other heart problems.
- **Other chronic diseases** and some treatments for those diseases can result in heart failure.

## A GROWING CAUSE OF HEART FAILURE

Cardiac amyloidosis is a rare but often under-diagnosed condition that occurs when an abnormal protein (amyloid) builds up in the heart muscle, possibly causing heart failure and/or heart arrhythmias such as Atrial Fibrillation (Afib). Amyloid also may increase elsewhere in the body, sometimes causing pain and numbness in the legs, problems with the digestive system, carpal tunnel syndrome and other symptoms. There are two kinds of amyloidosis that typically affect the heart.

**AL (Light Chain) Amyloidosis** involves white blood cells in the bone marrow.

**ATTR (Transthyretin) Amyloidosis** causes a condition known as ATTR-CM (cardiomyopathy). There are two types of ATTR-CM.

- Hereditary ATTR-CM (about 25% of cases) is most commonly seen in African Americans. About 4% of the Black U.S. population carry the genetic variant that can cause this form of ATTR. Symptoms of this type often begin when people are in their 50s or 60s.
- “Wild” type ATTR-CM (about 75% of cases) most often affects Caucasian men over age 60. The wild type is becoming more common as more people are living longer.

# Symptoms of Heart Failure



Shortness of breath,  
especially when exercising  
or lying down



Swelling in your legs,  
ankles and feet



Feeling very tired or weak



A cough that  
won't go away



Being unable to do  
normal activities like  
walking up stairs



Increased heart rate



Lack of appetite  
or nausea

Some patients who have heart failure don't have any symptoms, and some may have different symptoms than those listed.

Learn more about managing symptoms on [page 17](#).



# Diagnosing Heart Failure

If you have any symptoms of heart failure, make an appointment with your doctor. Your doctor will do a physical exam and may do other tests. These tests will allow the doctor to see whether you have heart failure, and if so, to see how well your heart is pumping. Then you and your doctor can make a treatment plan that is right for you.

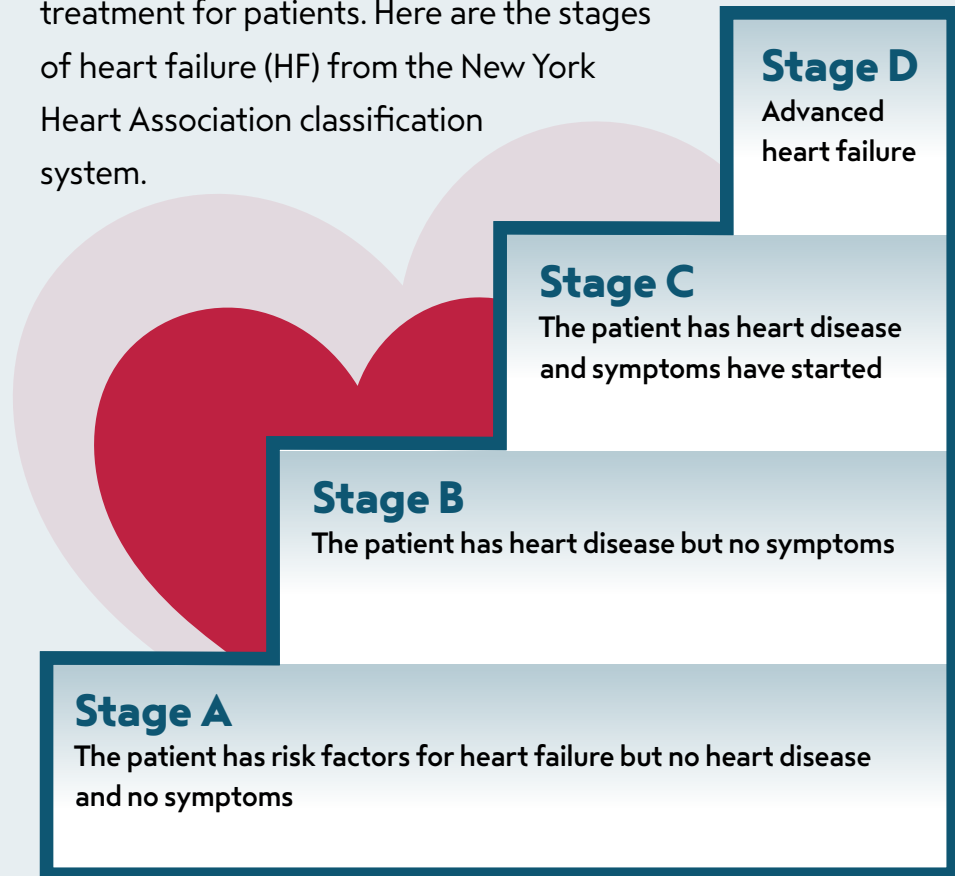
Heart failure is often measured in two ways to develop a treatment plan for a patient:

**Stages** go from A to D and describe how much heart failure is present.

For example, in Stage A, a person has heart failure risk factors but no symptoms or disease. In Stage D the person has advanced heart failure.

## STAGES OF HEART FAILURE

Physicians often determine the stage of heart failure to determine the best treatment for patients. Here are the stages of heart failure (HF) from the New York Heart Association classification system.



Source: havhrt.com

**Functional classes** measure how well a person does with physical activity. For example, in Class 1, a person would have no limits on physical activity. In Class 4, the patient is unable to perform physical activity without discomfort. Functional class can change over time.

## CLASSES OF HEART FAILURE

Physicians deciding the best treatment options for heart failure consider the functional status of the patient. The New York Heart Association functional classification system includes:



**Class I:** No limitation of physical activity. Ordinary physical activity does not cause extreme tiredness, irregular heartbeat (often too fast) or difficulty breathing (dyspnea).



**Class II:** Slight limitation of physical activity. Comfortable at rest, but ordinary physical activity causes extreme tiredness, irregular heartbeat (often too fast) or difficulty breathing (dyspnea).



**Class III:** Noticeable limitation of physical activity. Comfortable at rest, but minor activity (less than usual activity) causes extreme tiredness, irregular heartbeat (often too fast) or difficulty breathing (dyspnea).



**Class IV:** Unable to carry out any physical activity without discomfort and/or pain. These symptoms indicate the heart is unable to keep up, even when the patient is resting.

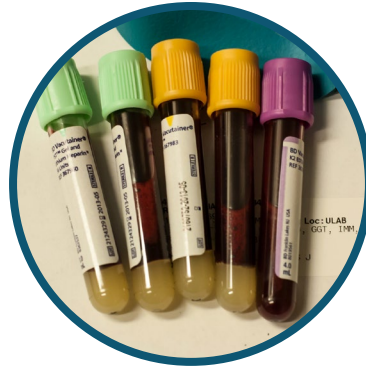
Source: havhrt.com

## Diagnosing Heart Failure

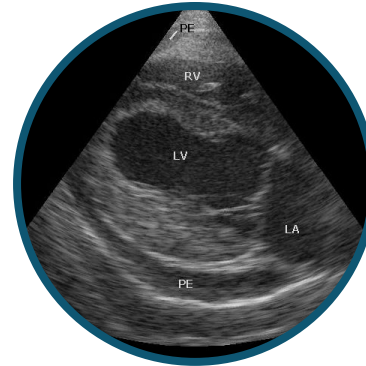
Your doctor diagnoses heart failure, including its stage and class through:



**Physical exam**



**Blood test**



**Echocardiogram  
(ECG) — uses sound waves to  
make images of the heart**



**Electrocardiogram  
(EKG) — measures the heart's  
natural electrical activity**



**Breathing tests**



**A chest X-ray**



# Treating and Managing Heart Failure

Many people with heart failure live full and happy lives by following their treatment plans. Your plan may include medication, devices, and making changes for a more healthy lifestyle.

## Medications

Many people who have heart failure will benefit from medication. If your doctor prescribes medication, make sure you understand what you are taking, when to take it, what it is for, and possible side effects. Also, if you find the medication doesn't seem to be working, your symptoms are getting worse, or you have new symptoms, talk to your doctor right away. Never stop taking medication without



talking to your doctor or treating healthcare professional first.

Main classes of heart failure medication include:

**Beta Blockers.** These lower blood pressure by lowering the force of your heart pumping and the heart rate.

**ACE Inhibitors or Angiotensin Receptor Blockers (ARB).** These help the blood flow by expanding the blood vessels and decreasing resistance.

**ARNIs (Angiotensin Receptor-Neprilysin Inhibitors).** These improve blood flow and help open the arteries, easing strain on the heart. They also help to reduce sodium, which can lower blood pressure.


**Diuretics.** This medication helps the body expel extra sodium and fluid, reducing your heart's workload.

**SGLT2 Inhibitors.** These have been used for diabetes to lower blood sugar. They are now being used for patients who have heart failure with or without diabetes.

Your doctor may prescribe more than one medication to prevent your heart failure from getting worse and to reduce your symptoms. Again, talk with your doctor to optimize your medication so you can feel better. It may take a few tries before you find the best mix and dosages for your condition.

## KEEP MEDICATION ON TRACK

It's important to take all medications as prescribed to prevent your heart failure from getting worse. You can use [this tracking form](#) to stay on schedule with your medications and successfully manage your heart failure.



**Mended Hearts®**  
**Medication Tracker**

Write in the time you take your medications if you choose. Mark in each square when you have taken this medication. Keep this form handy so you can keep track. Use a separate form for each medication. A result folder or binder may help if you have many medications.

Medication Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Generic Name (if any): \_\_\_\_\_  
 This medication is for: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Possible side effects: \_\_\_\_\_

Who do I contact if I have questions or concerns?  
 Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Pharmacy: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Refill on (days): \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Month	AM	Midday	Afternoon	PM	Other	Comments (date of each medication, contraindications, etc.)
1						
2						
3						
4						
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12						

## Devices

Some patients who have heart failure may need a device. Some devices are used as treatment, some are a bridge to heart transplant, and some help monitor heart failure to keep you out of the hospital as much as possible. Some devices are implanted in the body and some are not.

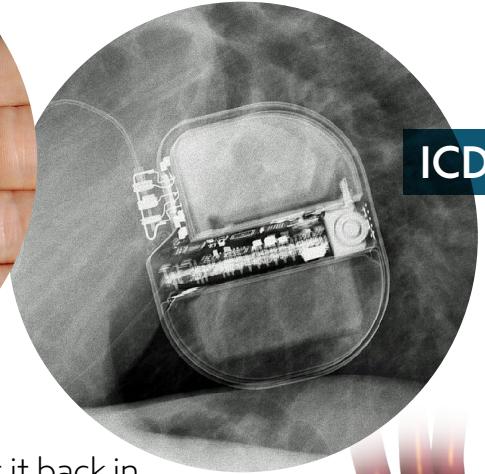
Some people who have heart failure will have abnormal heart rhythms — too fast, too slow, irregular rhythm, or a combination of these. Two devices that help your heart beat normally are pacemakers and Implantable Cardioverter Defibrillators (ICDs).

- **Pacemakers.** A pacemaker is a device that can be placed in your body to help your heartbeat stay at the right rhythm.
- **Implantable Cardioverter Defibrillator (ICD).** If your heart is beating at an abnormal rhythm, an ICD may be

**Pacemaker**

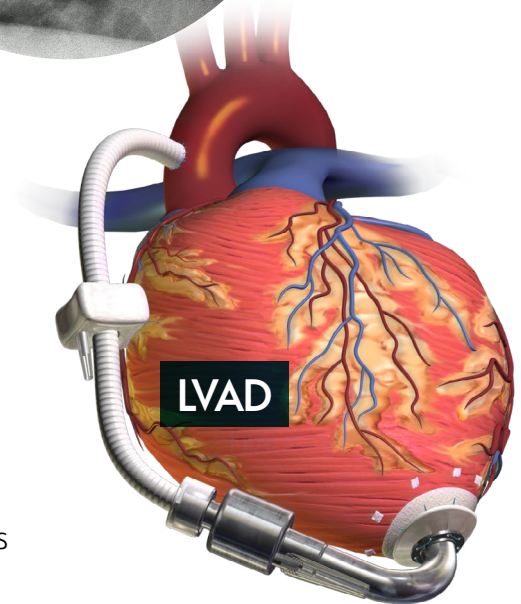


**ICD**



attached to your heart to get it back in the right rhythm. ICDs are used to help prevent sudden cardiac death in patients with ventricular fibrillation (when the heart beats fast and out of rhythm) and ventricular tachycardia (when the lower chambers of the heart beat too fast).

Sometimes, the heart becomes too weak to pump, and a **Left Ventricular Assist Device (LVAD)** will be implanted. This is a mechanical pump that can be used while waiting on a heart transplant or as treatment for heart failure.



**LVAD**



To learn more about how ICDs and LVADs can help a person with heart failure, watch the video at right.

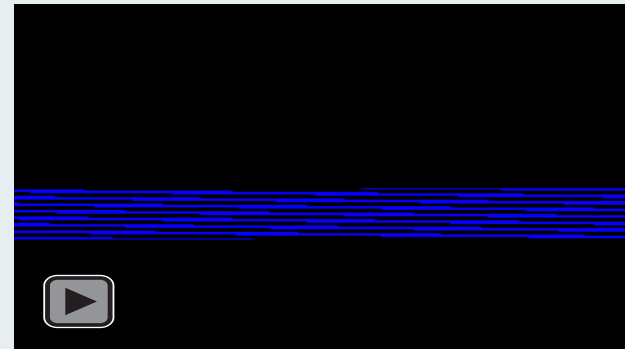
## How Monitoring Heart Failure Protects You

When people with heart failure are hospitalized, it's often because of fluid buildup in the lungs and body. Monitoring your heart failure can prevent problems and

keep you healthier.

Your cardiologist can monitor heart failure through blood tests, chest X-rays, EKGs, echocardiograms and other tests, and by listening to your heart and lungs.

### UNDERSTANDING HEART FAILURE



Click above to watch this video.

## NEW DEVICES MONITOR HEART FAILURE

There are some new, implantable (placed in the body) devices that can help keep your heart failure under control and keep you out of the hospital.

Sensors can be placed in the heart to track your heart pressure, fluid levels and how your heart pumps.

For example, one device can measure pressure in your pulmonary artery, the artery that carries blood from the right ventricle of the heart to the lungs. This device has been shown to keep people with preserved

ejection fraction (HFpEF) out of the hospital.

You use a handheld scanner to take a reading from the device every day. The reading is transmitted wirelessly to your doctors, so they can be alerted if your health has changed.

These devices alert your medical team to any issues and help keep you safe. They help your doctor understand if you need additional medication or medical treatment.



## **STEP 3:** Know Your Rights.



Step 3 of becoming an empowered patient is to know your rights. Many patients feel they are at the mercy of the system and just need to do “what the doctor says.” While it is very important to follow your treatment plan, you also need to know your rights as a patient.

You have the right to:

- Be treated as part of the team
- Ask questions and get answers
- Be heard
- Have easy access to notes and medical records
- A second opinion (and third and fourth)
- Suggest alternatives
- Feel confident in the team
- Change your mind
- Appeal decisions if you don't agree

Know your rights and insist that they are respected.



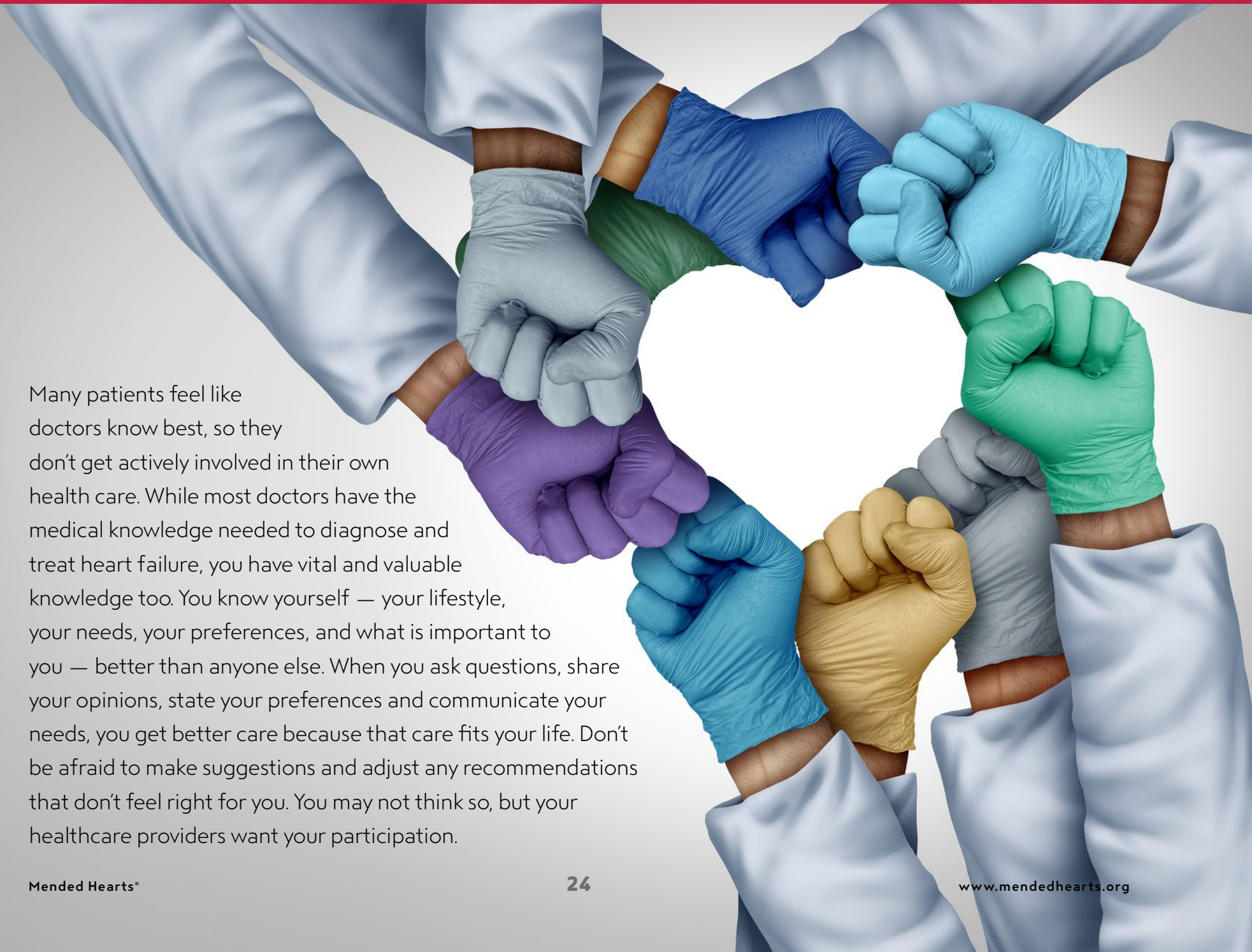




**STEP 4:**

Be Part of  
the Team.



A large graphic on the right side of the page shows several hands in white lab coats, each wearing a different colored glove (blue, green, purple, yellow, grey, etc.), interlocking to form a heart shape. The hands are arranged in a circular pattern, with the fingers of each hand hooking into the next, creating a central white space in the shape of a heart.

Many patients feel like doctors know best, so they don't get actively involved in their own health care. While most doctors have the medical knowledge needed to diagnose and treat heart failure, you have vital and valuable knowledge too. You know yourself — your lifestyle, your needs, your preferences, and what is important to you — better than anyone else. When you ask questions, share your opinions, state your preferences and communicate your needs, you get better care because that care fits your life. Don't be afraid to make suggestions and adjust any recommendations that don't feel right for you. You may not think so, but your healthcare providers want your participation.





## **STEP 5:** Get Information.



People who have heart failure do better if they not only educate themselves but get information they need by asking questions and finding resources that will help them stay healthier. There are many ways to get information, but the best way is to ask.

## Questions to Ask Your Doctor

Being an empowered patient starts by asking your doctor for the information and guidance you need to create a heart-healthy lifestyle. Here are a few to ask:

- **What caused my heart failure?**
- **How severe is my heart failure?**
- **What is the stage and level of my heart failure?**
- **What is my ejection fraction?**
- **What might happen if I don't do anything about my heart failure?**
- **What changes should I make to diet and fluid intake?**
- **What activities can I do and what activities should I avoid?**
- **Are there medications I can take to help me feel better?**
- **What treatment options are available for me, and what are the risks and benefits of each option?**

- **What should I do to monitor my heart failure at home and with my doctor?**
- **What signs should I look for to let me know when to call my doctor?**

If you think of other questions, be sure to write them down, and be sure they get answered (and that you understand the answer).

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Complete these sections in the downloaded PDF, or print the page and write your answers.



**STEP 6:**  
Voice  
Your  
Opinion.



The next step in becoming an empowered patient is voicing your opinion. Your voice matters. Your story matters. Your preferences, wants and needs matter. If you are uncomfortable with something, speak up and ask for a solution. Be kind and considerate in your requests, but don't be afraid to share your concerns, suggestions, feelings and needs with your healthcare team.

Some patients are afraid that they will be labeled as a "trouble patient," but the reality is most doctors and nurses value your opinion and want you to participate in your care. After all, you can't be an effective part of your healthcare team if you don't share your thoughts and opinions.

Consider the following top 10 tips from patients about communicating with your doctor or healthcare provider.



**1.** Be clear about your health goals and specific about what you want to know.



**2.** Don't be afraid to keep asking questions until you understand.



**3.** Learn about your condition so you are better prepared.



**4.** Find the right healthcare professional for you and be willing to get a second opinion.



**5.** Ask about the best way to communicate with your healthcare professional.



**6.** Keep a list of questions and take it with you to appointments.



**7.** Ask your healthcare professional for resources and educational materials so you can learn more.



**8.** You are the expert on you. Don't be afraid to share your thoughts and opinions.



**9.** Take someone with you to appointments so you have an extra set of ears.



**10.** If you have questions or concerns, don't wait for an appointment to communicate.





## **STEP 7:**

Make Informed  
Decisions  
That Are  
Right for You.





# Living With Heart Failure

There are many things you can do that will help you stay healthy longer and avoid hospital visits. While it can sometimes seem overwhelming, at Mended Hearts we have many patients with heart failure who are living, and thriving. We know you can do it too!

## SEVEN STEPS TO LIVING WITH HEART FAILURE

- Follow your treatment plan.
- Manage your symptoms.
- Make any needed dietary changes.
- Exercise or do physical activity regularly.
- Take medication as prescribed.
- Monitor your progress.
- Stay connected.



Before we get into the Seven Steps for Living with Heart Failure, it is important for you to set some health goals so you know what you are trying to accomplish. Some patients want to reduce their symptoms, some want to be more physically active, and others want to feel more energetic. Sharing your health goals with your doctor is a first step toward making them a reality.

Please record your health goals here:



## 1. Follow your treatment plan.

Your doctor or healthcare team created a treatment plan, hopefully with your

input and suggestions, that is right for you. It is very important that you follow this plan. If you have questions or concerns, or if something doesn't feel right or is making you feel worse, call your doctor or healthcare professional right away so you can make any needed adjustments.

My treatment plan is:

Note: If your plan includes medications, we have a separate medication tracker for you to use. Simply name the medications here, and you will be able to fill in more detail in the medication tracker.

Complete these sections in the downloaded PDF, or print the page and write your answers.



## 2. Manage your symptoms.

One of the best things you can do for yourself is to manage your symptoms.

Earlier in this Guide, we gave you a list of common symptoms. You might have some or all of these. Be sure to list *all* of your symptoms, even if they seem unrelated to your heart condition.

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Talk to your doctor or healthcare professional about your symptoms, what to do if your symptoms get worse, what symptoms warrant a call to your doctor, hospital, healthcare team or 911.

If I have these symptoms, or if these symptoms get worse, I should contact my **doctor or healthcare team.**

**Doctor or healthcare professional I should contact:**

**Name:**

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**Phone number:**

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**Email:**

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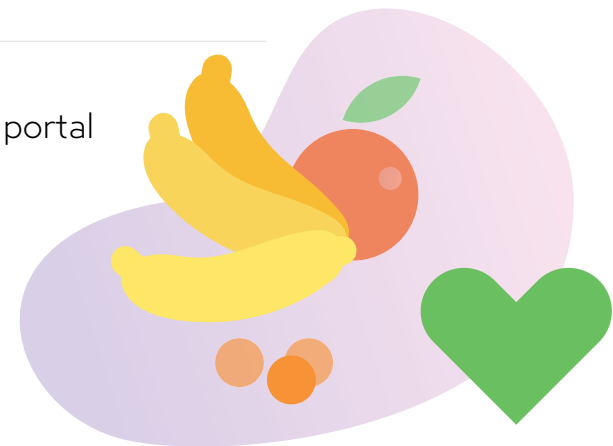
**Preferred way to contact my doctor or healthcare team:**

**Phone      Text      Email**

**Online health portal:**

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If you use an online health portal on your computer, laptop, phone or device, be sure to keep the login password in a safe and secure place.





### 3. Make any needed dietary changes.

Often, patients who have heart failure will require dietary adjustments.

Always follow your doctor's orders about what to eat and what not to eat. Also, some foods might interfere with medication you are taking, so make sure you know what they are and whether you need to avoid them completely or just reduce them. Make sure your doctor or healthcare provider reviews and approves your dietary plan.

It can be discouraging to limit favorite foods and beverages that don't fit into your plan for healthy eating. Remember that in most cases, you don't have to change overnight, and there are *many* resources that can help you find healthy alternatives that are still satisfying.

### MEAL PREP TIPS FROM PEOPLE WITH HEART FAILURE

Managing weight can feel overwhelming. Make a list of your goals and take the most important steps first. As you develop new, healthier habits, take additional steps. When you change your eating habits, keep following the diet and fluid restrictions or requirements that your doctor gives you.

People with heart failure offer the following tips:

- Make a plan for your meals each week.
- Prepare extra food and freeze it, to avoid eating store-bought microwave meals that are high in salt.
- Use measuring cups and spoons to help you follow portion sizes recommended by your doctor.
- Reduce the number of meals that you prepare by frying. Make a plan that includes baking, grilling, roasting, broiling, steaming, and/or cooking food in liquid (poaching).
- Use a 9" plate or bowl to serve your meals. The smaller plate tricks your brain into feeling full, while you enjoy smaller portions.
- Ask friends and family to support your heart-healthy goals. Share meals together.



**Eat to Help Your Heart.** Eat more fruit and vegetables, including fresh and frozen options. Choose lean proteins, like beans, tofu, fish, eggs, and skinless chicken and turkey (or remove skins before you eat the poultry).

**Watch Your Salt.** Many people with heart failure often have limits on how much salt (sodium) they should eat. Most of the sodium we eat is already in prepared or packaged foods. Ask your doctor about your best sodium level. The good news is there are many recipes and meals that now have lower sodium but taste good. There are also many salt-free herbs that you can use to add flavor. The American Heart Association offers useful information on healthy eating.

- Eat less packaged food, canned food, and restaurant food.
- Avoid microwave meals and frozen vegetables in sauces.

## HOW TO READ A FOOD LABEL

<b>Nutrition Facts</b>	
8 servings per container	
<b>Serving size</b>	<b>2/3 cup (55g)</b>
<b>Amount per serving</b>	
<b>Calories</b>	<b>230</b>
<b>% Daily Value*</b>	
<b>Total Fat</b> 8g	<b>10%</b>
Saturated Fat 1g	<b>5%</b>
Trans Fat 0g	
<b>Cholesterol</b> 0mg	<b>0%</b>
<b>Sodium</b> 160mg	<b>7%</b>
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 37g	<b>13%</b>
Dietary Fiber 4g	<b>14%</b>
Total Sugars 12g	
Includes 10g Added Sugars	<b>20%</b>
<b>Protein</b> 3g	
Vitamin D 2mcg	<b>10%</b>
Calcium 260mg	<b>20%</b>
Iron 8mg	<b>45%</b>
Potassium 240mg	<b>6%</b>

\* The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

**Serving Size:** This tells you how much of the food makes up one serving. If you eat more than one serving, all the other values increase.

**Fat:** Limit saturated fats and avoid trans fats. Both are bad for your health.

**Cholesterol:** It's wise to limit your daily cholesterol intake.

**Sodium (salt):** Those with no health challenges should eat less than 1,500 mg of sodium a day. People with heart failure will need to ask their doctor about what is right for them.

**Total Carbohydrate (starches):** This tells you how many grams of carbohydrate are in one serving.

- Look for "no salt added" or "low sodium" labels.
- Use fewer condiments (like ketchup, mustard and soy sauce) and look for ones that are labeled low-sodium.

- Flavor food with garlic, onions, herbs or lemon as an alternative to salt.
- Cut the salt in recipes in half.

**Restrict Fluids if Needed.** Fluid restrictions are common for people with heart failure. If your doctor or healthcare provider asks you to restrict your fluid intake, or drink less, find ways to restrict fluid but still enjoy what you're eating. Two tips that you might find helpful are:

- Freeze grapes or other fruit and chew on them during the day.
- Keep your mouth moist by brushing your teeth several times a day.

**Avoid Alcohol.** Since alcohol consumption can worsen heart failure, limit or don't drink alcoholic drinks.

**Here are our top 10 healthy eating tips from patients:**

1. Avoid or limit fried foods and other foods you know are unhealthy.
2. Learn to read food labels so you know what you are eating.
3. Start with 1-2 healthy options that you already like and add more when you are ready.
4. Have a treat now and then so you don't feel deprived.
5. Cook meals at home, if you can. And try some new healthy recipes.
6. Ask your doctor or dietitian about eating plans that are best for you.
7. Ask your family members or friends to eat healthy with you.
8. Avoid buying unhealthy foods so they are not easy to get to.
9. Don't give up if you have an unhealthy eating day (or two). Start again.
10. Use an app or keep a food journal to help you make good choices.



#### **4. Exercise or do physical activity regularly.**

Becoming more active, even a little bit at a time,

will make your mind and body feel better. Talk with your doctor or healthcare provider about exercises and activities that are right for you and make a plan. You may have some limitations or restrictions, but work with your healthcare team to find something that you will enjoy and feel you can do. It is very important that you find things you are more likely to enjoy because then you will keep them up. Research and request access to discounted programs for older adults or those on a limited budget.

Some patients may have cardiac rehab available to them, and this is a wonderful way to get exercise that is good for your heart and mind.

#### **Here are our top 10 tips for exercise and physical activity from patients like you:**

1. Start small and increase activity each week.
2. Do activities you enjoy so you are more likely to keep doing them.
3. Cardiac rehab is a great place for patients to get exercise.
4. Create an exercise routine so you can develop new habits.
5. Walking is great exercise and can help improve your mood.
6. Talk to your doctor about the best types of activities for you.
7. Find an exercise buddy or join a class to help keep you motivated.
8. Keep track of your activity with a journal, chart or app.
9. If you are sitting for more than an hour, get up and move and stretch.
10. Be sure to stretch and listen to your body. Rest when you need to.

**Reducing Stress.** Another benefit of exercise and activity is they often reduce stress levels. This may help your heart in many different ways. Try gentle exercises, breathing exercises, stretching and other activities that reduce tension in your body and mind.

**Healthy Habit Tracker.** We at Mended Hearts have made a [Healthy Habit Tracker](#) for you that is simple, easy and fun to use. We want to help you change your eating and activity levels today and begin to develop healthy habits that build strength and confidence for the long run.

You pick the habits that you want to adopt and track and then fill in this tracking form. Once you feel you have

**My Healthy Heart Tracker**

Clear the way to a healthier heart by tracking your healthy habits for 30 days. There's also a place for you to reflect on your progress.

Month	Walk	Drink Water	Exercise	Read	Healthy Eating	Take Medication
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						
7						
8						
9						
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REFLECTIONS: \_\_\_\_\_

adopted those habits, you can pick new ones to adopt. This may help you keep on track and motivated.



## 5. Take medication as prescribed.

Most people who have heart failure will benefit from medication. If your

doctor prescribes medication, make sure you understand what you are taking, when to take it, what it is for, possible side effects, and what side effects should prompt a call to your prescribing physician. Also, many medications will take days to weeks to work, and you notice a difference. If you medication is not working as described by your doctor, your symptoms are getting worse, or you have new symptoms, talk to your doctor right away. Never stop taking medication or increase the dose without talking to your doctor or treating healthcare professional first.



You may be taking one or both types of medications commonly prescribed for heart failure. One type of medication (guideline-directed medical therapy or GDMT) helps the heart work stronger and more efficiently and has been shown in clinical trials to reduce hospitalizations, death due to heart failure or both. The other type of medication, known as a diuretic (or “water pill”) helps treat the symptoms of congestion (fluid retention) such as breathlessness or swelling.

#### **GDMT**

Some of the main classes of GDMT to treat heart failure are:

- **Beta Blockers** — The drugs reduce the stress on the heart and reduce the heart rate, allowing the heart to pump more efficiently and to require less oxygen to do so. These drugs are cornerstones in treatment of heart failure.
- **ACE Inhibitors or Angiotensin Receptor**

**Blockers (ARB)** — These help the blood flow by expanding the blood vessels and decreasing resistance which increases the amount of oxygen which can be delivered to the body’s muscles and organs. They also help the heart to ultimately work more efficiently.

- **ARNIs (Angiotensin Receptor-Neprilysin Inhibitors)** — These are a combination of an ARB (with its benefits) and a neprilysin inhibitor which helps to eliminate extra sodium and water from the body as well as improve kidney function.
- **SGLT2 Inhibitors** — These have been used for diabetes to lower blood sugar. Serendipitously, they were found to be beneficial among patients with heart failure (with or without diabetes). How they work is not completely understood, but they have diuretic affects (see below) and counterbalance some of issues that can occur with the kidney seen in patients with heart failure.

**Diuretics**

- **Loop diuretics** — Reduce the symptoms of heart failure by helping the body eliminate sodium and water, resolving breathlessness and swelling which can reduce how well a patient can function. These are the most used type of diuretics (such as furosemide or torsemide).
- **Thiazide diuretics** — Milder diuretics than loop diuretics, however, when used in combination with a loop diuretic, they can have a noticeable diuretic effect. They are most used in patients who have developed resistance to loop diuretics alone.

Your doctor will likely prescribe more than one medication to prevent your heart failure from getting worse and to reduce your symptoms. Again, if you are not feeling better, talk to your doctor so you can optimize your medication and feel better. It may take a few tries before you get the right medication or combination of

medications.

Here is a [medication tracker](#) you can use to not only keep track of your medication and when to take it, but to understand what the medication is for and possible side effects. You can print one for each medication and keep them together to take to appointments.



## 6. Monitor your progress.

Sometimes, when we are making lifestyle changes, especially changes to diet

and exercise, it can seem like nothing is changing. This can become frustrating and make you want to give up. That is why it is important to monitor your progress. You will be able to look back and see how well you have been doing.

Many patients will have times when they are doing well and times where they don't feel as good. This is normal. Do not



let that stop you from continuing with your treatment plan.

**Watch for Weight Increases.** You might also be asked to monitor your weight at home to watch for sudden increases caused by fluid buildup. Be sure to follow your doctor's plan for you. Most people should contact their doctor if they:

- Gain more than two to three pounds in a 24-hour period.
- Gain five pounds in a week.

**Monitor More If Needed.** Some people are also asked to monitor blood pressure, fluid intake and breathing.

- Your doctor and their team can show you how.
- Ask your doctor about technology to monitor your heart failure.



## 7. Stay connected.

Staying connected to others, or sometimes getting connected in the first place, can help you

adopt healthy changes and feel better emotionally and physically. Research shows that getting the support you need can reduce hospital and doctor visits too.

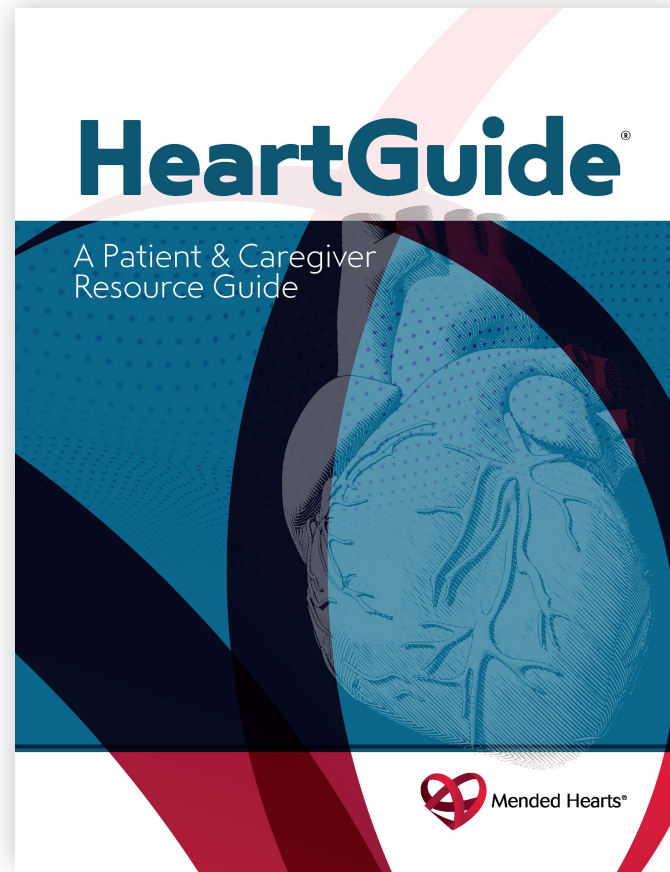
**Peer Support.** Getting emotional support from another patient with heart failure who is trained to provide support can make you feel less scared and alone. Peer support has many benefits not only to emotional health, but your physical health too. Join a support group, go to places where you can connect with other patients, or get support by phone or online.

Mended Hearts has a Welcome Home program to support patients who have heart failure as they recover from a hospital stay. We also have a Heartline hotline (1-844-HEART87), a toll-free number you can call



and talk to another patient like you. You can even schedule a peer support visit online at [www.myheartvisit.org](http://www.myheartvisit.org).

**Supporting Others.** If possible for you, join a group or get involved in a community that helps others. Joining a support group like Mended Hearts where you can give and get support can make a big difference in your sense of well-being. Volunteering can also make you feel better because you are taking a difficult experience and using it for good. Also, we know through research that patients who are trained as Mended Hearts Accredited Visitors — those who provide peer support to patients in the hospital — report a better quality of life than those who don't. Connecting with others is an important part of healing.



**DISCUSSION GUIDES**

**JOIN MENDED HEARTS**

**LEARN MORE ABOUT HEART FAILURE**



The Mended Hearts, Inc.

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SCAN ME