

CONGESTIVE HEART FAILURE



Congestive Heart Failure or "CHF" is a weakening of the heart's pumping power. With heart failure, your body does not get enough oxygen and nutrition to meet its needs. This does not mean your heart has stopped working, but it is not working as well as it should.

Common warning signs of CHF are:

- Weight gain (2 - 3 pounds in one day)
 - Feeling tired or fatigued
 - Chest pain
 - Swelling of the legs or ankles
 - Shortness of breath
 - Inability to sleep
 - Increased urination (especially at night)
- Refer to CHF Caution Flags

Reduce salt in your diet!

- Eat plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Choose foods that are low in salt.
- Check food labels for sodium & number of servings.
- Avoid "hidden salt" in frozen dinners, canned soup & vegetables and processed meats.

Things to remember:

- Take your medicine every day
- Weigh yourself every morning
- Eat less salt
- Call your home health nurse or doctor if your symptoms get worse (Yellow or Red Caution Flags).





Heart Failure: Making Changes to Your Diet

When you have heart failure, excess fluid is more likely to build up in your body. This makes the heart work harder to pump blood. Fluid buildup also causes symptoms such as shortness of breath and edema (swelling). Controlling the amount of salt (sodium) you eat may help prevent fluid from building up. Your doctor may also tell you to reduce the amount of fluid you drink.

Reading Food Labels

Read food labels to keep track of how much sodium you eat. Keep in mind that canned, frozen, and processed foods can be high in salt. Check the amount of sodium in each serving. Also, watch out for high-sodium ingredients like MSG (monosodium glutamate), baking soda, and sodium phosphate. Your health-care provider will tell you how much sodium you should eat each day.

Eating Less Salt

Give yourself time to get used to eating less salt. It may take a little while, but your heart is worth it. Here are some tips to help:

- Take the salt shaker off the table. Replace it with salt-free herb mixes and spices.
- Eat fresh or plain frozen vegetables. These have much less salt than canned vegetables.
- Choose low-sodium snacks like sodium-free pretzels and crackers, or air popped popcorn.
- Don't add salt to your food when you're cooking. Instead, season your foods with pepper, lemon, garlic, or onion.
- When you eat out, ask that your food be cooked without added salt.

If You're Told to Limit Fluid

You may need to limit fluid intake to help prevent swelling. This includes anything that is liquid at room temperature, such as ice cream and soup. If your doctor tells you to limit fluid, try these tips:

- Measure drinks in a measuring cup before you drink them. This will help you meet daily goals.
- Chill drinks to make them more refreshing.
- Try frozen lemon wedges to quench thirst.
- Only drink when you're thirsty.
- Chew sugarless gum or try sugar-free hard candy to keep your mouth moist.

When to Call Your Doctor

Call your doctor right away if you have any signs of worsening heart failure, including sudden weight gain, increased swelling of your legs or ankles, or more trouble breathing when you're resting.



