

# Heart Failure Overview

## What is heart failure?

Heart failure means the heart is not pumping as well as it should. It occurs when the heart muscle is weakened and cannot pump enough blood to meet the body's needs. Heart failure is a condition that gets worse over time and does not have a cure; however, when the condition is managed with medications and healthy lifestyle changes, many people with heart failure lead a full, enjoyable life.

## How to live your best life with heart failure

### Monitor your weight

Your provider may recommend achieving or maintaining a goal weight. Tracking your weight each day is an important part of managing your symptoms.

- The first time you weigh yourself is your baseline or “dry” weight.
- Weigh yourself each morning with the same scale and the same amount of clothes.
- Write your weight down in a log. If you don't have a log, ask your Landmark team for one.
- Reach out to your Landmark team if you've gained 3 pounds or more in a day or 5 pounds in a week.

### Give up nicotine

Each puff of nicotine from tobacco smoke temporarily increases your blood pressure and heart rate. People who quit smoking are more likely to have their heart failure symptoms improve.

- Smoking support hotline: 1-800-QUIT-NOW

**My baseline or “dry” weight is:**

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**My daily fluid restriction is:**

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## Track your fluid intake

When your body is retaining fluid, you may be asked to limit how much fluid you drink.

## Make healthy lifestyle decisions

- Avoid alcohol
- Avoid or limit caffeine
- Get active with daily exercise as tolerated
- Eat a heart healthy diet
- Manage stress
- Get vaccinated against flu and pneumonia

## Heart failure zones

Green zone symptoms	All clear: I feel well
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Weight on target. Goal range _____ lbs.</li><li>• Little to no swelling</li><li>• No breathing difficulties</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Continue medication compliance</li><li>• Continue daily weight checks</li><li>• Adhere to healthy, low-salt diet</li></ul>
Yellow zone symptoms	Warning: I do not feel well
<p><b>Check for the following signs or symptoms:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Weight increase _____ lbs. over _____ days</li><li>• Swelling in ankles, legs or abdomen</li><li>• Difficulty breathing with activity</li><li>• Consistent cough/wheeze</li><li>• Excessive fatigue</li><li>• Weight decrease _____ lbs. over _____ days</li><li>• Dry mouth/dry skin</li><li>• Dizziness</li></ul>	<p><b>If my weight has increased:</b></p> <hr/> <hr/> <p><b>If my weight has decreased:</b></p> <hr/> <hr/>
Red zone symptoms	Emergency: I need to get help now
<p><b>Medical alert:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sudden, severe shortness of breath</li><li>• Chest pain that does not resolve with treatment (ex. Nitroglycerin)</li><li>• Onset of new chest pain, tightness or heaviness</li><li>• Sweating, weakness or fainting</li></ul>	<p><b>Action:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Call 911</li></ul>

## When should I worry or call Landmark first?

**Call Landmark if any of the symptoms below are worse than your baseline or if you develop any symptoms that are new for you including:**

- Shortness of breath with activity, rest or sleeping
- Difficulty breathing when lying flat (you may need to sleep on two or more pillows)
- Waking up tired or feeling anxious and restless
- Coughing or wheezing that doesn't stop – cough may produce white or pink blood-tinged mucus
- Swelling in the feet, ankles, legs or abdomen
- Lack of appetite or feeling sick to your stomach
- Weakness and lack of energy – you just can't get enough energy to do normal things, such as shopping, climbing stairs, carrying groceries or walking
- Confusion, trouble thinking, memory loss – not being sure what year it is or where you are
- Heart feels like it is racing or throbbing

**Additional symptoms your Landmark provider may want you to look out for:**

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**Call Landmark first. We answer 24/7.**

## Medications commonly used and approved to treat heart failure:

Your medications should be taken exactly as prescribed. Landmark has a staff of clinical pharmacists available who can help you understand your medications, the best way to take them and what you can expect from treatment. Consult with your provider or pharmacist before stopping or starting any medications, vitamins or supplements.

Class and medications	How they work
<b>ACE Inhibitors</b> Ex. Ealapril, lisinopril, quinapril, ramipril	<b>Helps to control blood pressure to make it easier for your heart to pump blood</b>
<b>ARBs</b> Ex. Candesartan, losartan, valsartan	
<b>ARNIs</b> Ex. Entresto (sacubitril/valsartan)	<b>Widens arteries to make pumping blood easier for the heart while also helping to lower blood pressure</b>
<b>Beta-blockers</b> Ex. Bisoprolol, carvedilol, metoprolol	<b>Helps to decrease how hard the heart pumps</b>
<b>Diuretics</b> Ex. Furosemide, bumetanide, torsemide, hydrochlorothiazide, metolazone	<b>Aids the body in removing extra fluid that can build up in your legs and ankles</b>
<b>Aldosterone Antagonist</b> Ex. Eplerenone, spironolactone	<b>These can be taken daily or used only as needed</b>

As a reminder, the medications used to treat your heart failure have the potential to lower your blood pressure. Be sure to check your blood pressure regularly at home and keep a log to go over with your provider.

## Heart failure and your diet

Your diet affects how much fluid builds up in your body. A low-sodium diet that includes a variety of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes and lean proteins can help. Use fresh or dried herbs and spices in place of salt to season your food, and limit or avoid processed foods whenever possible.

For some people with heart failure, fluid restriction may be recommended by your doctor. The information in this handout will help to guide you on how to follow a low-sodium diet and limit your fluid intake. For more information on choosing the right foods for you, ask to speak with your registered dietitian.

### Stay under your daily sodium limit

Aim for 1500-2000 milligrams of sodium (or less) each day. Do not consume that amount in one meal – try to spread it out throughout the day.

## Put the saltshaker away

It may be hard to stop adding salt to your food. If it is, cut down the salt you use by half for a week or two. Then cut it down by half again. Replace added salt with other salt-free seasonings like lemon juice, vinegar, garlic, curry, turmeric and allspice. Talk to your doctor or your dietitian if you plan to use salt substitutes such as Lite Salt or Nu-Salt.

Sodium is not just found in the saltshaker. Foods naturally high in sodium include:

- Smoked, cured, salted, canned or processed meat including bacon, cold cuts/deli meat, ham, hot dogs, pepperoni, sausage, sardines and anchovies
- Frozen dinners
- Canned foods like soup, ravioli, spam and chili
- American cheese
- Pickled, cured and fermented foods
- Snack foods like chips, pretzels, peanuts and crackers
- Pizza

Highly refined, processed foods may have more sodium than less processed or fresh foods.

Try replacing a few of your heavily processed foods if you can.

- Replace breakfast cereal with steel cut, rolled or old-fashioned oatmeal
- Eat whole wheat crackers with cheese instead of flavored cheese crackers
- Mix fruit in yogurt in place of flavored yogurt

**Replacing more processed foods with a variety of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, beans, nuts/seeds and lean protein can naturally help to lower your sodium intake.**

## Understanding food labels

Understanding the label on packaged foods puts you in charge of what you eat. Even if a food says “lower in sodium” or “reduced sodium” it may still be high in salt. The nutrition facts panel on the back of the product will tell you exactly how much sodium is in each serving.

Foods that contain 140 milligrams of sodium per serving or less are low-sodium foods. Different brands will have different sodium content. Keep an eye on your favorite products because recipes can change over time.

**This label shows that one serving is 2/3 cup of the product. If you eat 2/3 cup (1 serving), you will eat 160 milligrams of sodium. If you eat two servings, or 1-1/3 cups, you will eat 320 milligrams of sodium.**

Nutrition Facts	
8 servings per container	
Serving size	2/3 cup (55g)
Amount Per Serving	
<b>Calories</b>	<b>230</b>
%	
Total Fat 8g 10%	
Saturated Fat 1g 5%	
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg 0%	
Sodium 160mg 7%	
Total Carbohydrate 37g 13%	
Dietary Fiber 4g 14%	
Total Sugars 12g	
Includes 10g Added Sugars 20%	
Protein 3g	
Vitamin D 2mcg 10%	
Calcium 260mg 20%	
Iron 8.1mg 45%	
Potassium 282mg 6%	
*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.	

Sometimes it's hard to figure out how much sodium is too much. Here are some guidelines to help define low-, moderate- and high-sodium foods.

### Examples of low-sodium foods:

**Low-sodium foods have 140 mg of sodium per serving or less.**

- Fresh or frozen fruits and vegetables, whole grains and dry beans
- Dave's Killer Bread® Thin-Sliced 21 Whole Grains and Seeds (105 gm/1 slice)
- Schmidt Old Tyme 647 Wheat bread (130 mg/1 slice)
- Chobani® non-fat Greek yogurt, vanilla (65 mg/ ¾ cup)
- Tzatziki (95 mg/2 Tbsp)
- Swiss cheese (60 mg/1 oz)
- Gochugaru (90 mg/1 Tbsp)
- Tabatchnick low-sodium split pea soup by (35 mg/1 pouch)
- Milk (130 mg/1 cup)
- Old-fashioned oats (0 mg/ ½ cup)

### Examples of moderate-sodium foods:

**Moderate-sodium foods are between 140 mg and 300 mg of sodium per serving. These foods need a little caution. You can eat these foods on a low-sodium diet but limit how many you have in one meal and throughout the day.**

- Cheerios™ (190 mg/1.5 cup)
- Cheez-It® (230 mg/27 crackers)
- Instant oatmeal (260 mg/1 packet)
- Cheddar cheese (200 mg/1 oz)
- Muffin (250 mg/2 oz)
- Pre-made salsa (195 mg/2 Tbsp)

### Examples of high-sodium foods:

**High-sodium foods have more than 300 mg of sodium per serving. It is best to avoid these, if you can.**

- Progresso™ Chicken and Homestyle Noodle canned soup (690 mg soup/1 cup)
- Progresso™ Reduced Sodium Roasted Chicken Noodle Soup (470 mg soup/1 cup)
- Oscar Mayer™ bacon (350 mg/2 slices)
- Del Monte Fresh Cut French Style Green Beans (380 mg/ ½ cup)
- Cottage cheese (460 mg/ ½ cup)
- Barbecue sauce (350 mg/2 Tbsp)
- Soy sauce (900 mg/1 Tbsp)
- Canned tomato sauce (640 mg/ ½ cup)
- Gochujang (540 mg/1 Tbsp)

### If you can't avoid sodium-based foods, consider:

- Think about the sodium content of the other foods at the meal
- Remove or replace them with very low- or no-sodium foods
- Look for lower sodium versions of these foods
- Cut the portion in half (or smaller)
- Skip the high-sodium food and find a replacement with less sodium that you enjoy

## Make some changes when eating out

Food at restaurants may be higher in sodium than you expect. Some restaurants have menus that list sodium, but many don't. If the restaurant does not have sodium information, talk to your server. Ask that the chef avoid adding salt. Order sauce or dressing on the side. Replace high-sodium sides with lower-sodium substitutions. Eating half of your meal is another great way to reduce the salt you eat.

Choose this:	Instead of this:
Fruit salad	Hashbrowns
Salad	Fries
Salad	Soup
Oil and vinegar or lemon juice	Dressing
Grilled, baked, poached, or broiled meat, fish and poultry	Cured and salted meat, fish and poultry
Steamed rice	Fried rice

**Remember, menu items may be higher in sodium than you think. Here are a few that may surprise you.**

- Bowl of soup at Panera Bread (1080-1670 mg sodium)
- Cheese ravioli with marinara sauce from Olive Garden (2190 mg sodium)
- Cheeseburger from McDonald's (720 mg sodium)

### Fluid restriction

Sometimes your doctor will ask you to limit your fluids. Some fluids are easy to identify like coffee, tea, water, juice and milk, but others may be more difficult. If a food is liquid at room temperature, it counts as a liquid. Some unexpected foods and drinks that count as liquid include:

- Alcohol
- Gravy
- Popsicles
- Syrup
- Gelatin or Jell-O
- Ice cream
- Soup
- Watermelon

If it's hard to limit your fluids, try:

- Chewing gum
- Limiting salt
- Eating ice chips or popsicles (however, this counts as a fluid)
- Eating hard candy
- Sipping slowly
- Rinsing with mouthwash

## Emotional and financial concerns

Sometimes a person can feel overwhelmed after being diagnosed with chronic heart failure or after living with the diagnosis for a while. Remembering to weigh yourself every day, changing eating/grocery shopping habits, keeping track of medical appointments, needing more help from family and friends and coping with these lifestyle changes can result in feelings of worry, sadness, anger, frustration, helplessness and hopelessness.

### Do any of these questions apply to you?

	Yes	No
Are you finding it difficult to get and/or pay for the medication and other items (oxygen, weight scale, pulse oximeter) prescribed by your doctors?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you have trouble finding transportation to your medical appointments?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you find it challenging to afford the foods that you are now encouraged to eat?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you struggle to understand the information that your doctor gives you about chronic heart failure?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you need help with day-to-day tasks and chores?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you need help with dressing or bathing/showering?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you find yourself leaving your home less often and feeling isolated as a result?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you answered yes to any of the questions above, please discuss your concerns with your Landmark care team. They may also connect you to additional team members such as social workers or behavioral health specialists to ensure all your health care needs are addressed.

## Contact us

Finding out you have chronic heart failure can be hard to face, but you do not need to face it alone. Knowing what to expect and what you can do to help yourself is important. It can give you more control over your disease. We are available for urgent visits or to provide support over the phone.

### You can reach Landmark 24/7. Please call us if you:

- Experience any of the symptoms listed that do not resolve
- Have a worsening of your baseline symptoms
- Find problems with your medication, even if they seem minor
- Have any questions or concerns

### Landmark is here to help.



Sources: [www.bcheartfailure.ca](http://www.bcheartfailure.ca)  
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