

Nutrition Guidelines for Heart Failure

What is Heart Failure?

Heart failure is a chronic condition that needs lifelong management. It occurs when the heart muscle is weakened and cannot pump as strongly as before. This means blood moves slowly through the body and less oxygen reaches the organs and muscles. This can make you feel very tired and short of breath.

Symptoms of heart failure can also include:

- difficulty breathing at rest or when lying flat
- sudden weight gain
- swelling in your feet, ankles and legs
- bloating or a feeling of fullness in your stomach
- loss of appetite

Healthy eating for heart failure:

♥ Follow Canada's Food Guide

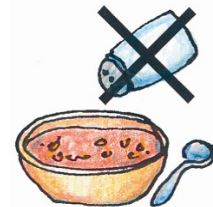
You can help manage your heart health by following Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide. This guide has these important points:

- Eat at least one dark green and one orange vegetable each day.
- Choose vegetables and fruit prepared with little or no added fat, sugar or salt.
- Choose grain products that are lower in fat, sugar or salt.
- Select lower fat milk alternatives (skim, 1%, or 2 % milk).
- Eat at least 2 servings of fish each week.
- Select lean meat and alternatives prepared with little or no added fat or salt.

♥ Limit your salt intake

- Salt acts like a sponge by keeping extra fluid in your body. Your heart has to work harder to pump this extra fluid.

- Avoid adding salt to your food during cooking and at the table. Avoid choosing high salt foods. These include processed and pre-packaged food items.



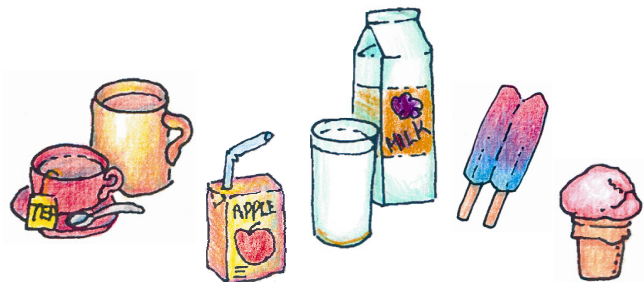
- Ask a dietitian about specific suggestions on how to limit your salt and sodium in your diet.

♥ Fluid intake

- Ask your doctor whether you need a fluid restriction. For some individuals, fluid is restricted to 6 to 8 cups (1½ to 2 litres) of fluid per day, depending on your symptoms.



- It is important to spread out your fluid intake throughout the day.
- A fluid is anything that is liquid at room temperature, such as water, tea, coffee, milk, juices, pop, Jell-O®, popsicles and ice cream.



Tips to decrease thirst

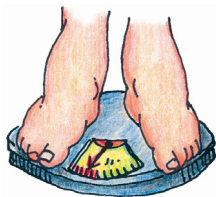
If you find thirst to be a problem, follow these helpful tips to help you control your fluid intake.

- ✓ suck on sugar-free hard sour candies or chew sugar-free gum
- ✓ use water from a spray bottle
- ✓ suck on a few ice chips or a sugar-free popsicle
- ✓ eat frozen fruits (such as grapes, strawberries, peaches or pineapple chunks)
- ✓ eat crunchy vegetables and fruit like celery, cucumber, green peppers or apples
- ✓ brush and floss your teeth more often to keep teeth clean
- ✓ use a cold air humidifier, especially at night
- ✓ use a lip balm to keep lips from drying out. Try one that does not contain petroleum
- ✓ ask your doctor or pharmacist for products that help with dry mouth

Maintain a healthy body weight

- Some people may benefit from weight loss to manage heart disease.
- Some people may need to increase their calories to gain weight.
- Discuss your goals around body weight with a dietitian.

- Weight gain may be due to fluid. Weigh yourself daily to help monitor and identify early signs of fluid retention.



- Weigh yourself with an empty bladder, on the same scale, at the same time of the day and with the same amount of clothing to ensure your weight is accurate.

- Keep a record of your daily weights.

Good lifestyle habits

Your health depends on the choices you make and the lifestyle you choose. By making small lifestyle changes, you can help manage and control your symptoms.

- Become smoke free
- Be active every day
- Balance your activity with rest periods
- Take the medications your doctor prescribes
- Tell your doctor about any laxatives, cough/cold medicine, antacids, herbal and/or nutritional supplements you are taking or planning to take



Know your symptoms

Monitoring the symptoms of heart failure can help you stay in control and keep you out of the hospital. Call your doctor or nurse as soon as possible if you notice any of the following symptoms:

- Increased shortness of breath
- Difficulty breathing when lying down
- Sudden swelling in the legs and ankles
- Sudden weight gain of 3 to 5 pounds in a week
- Extreme fatigue or tiredness
- Sudden dizziness or heart palpitations