

## Heart Failure: Managing Other Diseases



Many people who have heart failure also have other health problems.

Managing any other problems can help reduce your heart's workload and make your heart failure better. Follow-up is important to help your doctor track all your conditions and give you the best treatment.

### Diseases that are common in heart failure

A number of diseases commonly cause or occur along with heart failure. Treating these conditions can help you feel better and live longer.

**High blood pressure** makes your heart work harder and can cause heart failure.

**Diabetes** that is not controlled can damage your heart and lead to heart failure.

**Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)** is a serious lung problem in which the lungs are damaged and are not able to take enough oxygen from the blood. The heart works harder to try to get more blood and oxygen to the lungs, which can lead to heart failure. Heart

failure causes fluid to build up in the lungs, too, which can make it harder to breathe.

**High cholesterol** causes fat and other substances to build up in your arteries (atherosclerosis). This hardens and narrows the arteries and reduces blood flow to the heart.

**Kidney problems** can occur in heart failure because your heart does not pump enough blood to your kidneys. The kidneys need oxygen-rich blood to work properly. When your kidneys do not get enough blood, extra fluid and wastes build up in your body.

**Anemia** increases your body's need for blood and oxygen, which makes your heart work harder.

**Arthritis** is a common health problem that causes the cartilage between the joints to break down over time. The body sees this breakdown as an injury and responds with a process called inflammation. Inflammation causes the joints to be swollen and painful. People who have rheumatoid arthritis have a higher risk of heart failure. Medicines for arthritis, such as ibuprofen, naproxen, or celecoxib, can make heart failure worse.

### Managing other diseases and heart failure

You will take medicines to treat the other diseases you have along with heart failure. It can be hard to balance the treatment for all your conditions. For instance, some medicines used to treat diabetes can make heart failure worse. You will need to have follow-up tests to make sure that all your medicines are working well together.

Luckily, many of the steps you can take for heart failure can also help with other problems:

- **Eat less salt** (sodium). Sodium causes you to retain water and makes it harder for your heart to pump. Limiting sodium can also help if you have kidney disease.
- **Watch your fluid intake** if your doctor advises it. Reducing fluids can ease your heart's workload and also help your kidneys.
- **Get regular exercise.** Regular, moderate exercise helps your heart. It also can help lower your blood pressure, reduce your cholesterol level, lower stress, and help you lose weight. Exercise for at least 30 minutes on most, preferably all, days of the week. Talk to your doctor before starting any new exercise.
- **Lose weight** if you are overweight. Losing weight can help you manage diabetes, lower your blood pressure and cholesterol level, and reduce the workload on your heart.
- **Stop smoking.** Smoking stresses your lungs, interferes with healing, and can make heart failure worse. Avoid secondhand smoke too.
- **Limit alcohol.** Excess alcohol raises your blood pressure. Ask your doctor how much, if any, is safe.

To stay as healthy as possible, work closely with your doctor. Have all your tests, and keep all your appointments. It is also important to:

- **Take your medicines exactly as prescribed.** Do not stop or change your medicines unless you talk to your doctor first.
- **Keep all your doctors informed** about your health problems and all the medicines you take for them. Medicines that can treat one disease may make another disease worse.

- **Talk to your doctor** before you take **any** vitamins, over-the-counter drugs, or herbal products. Do not take ibuprofen or naproxen unless you talk to your doctor first. They could make your heart failure and other problems worse.

## Questions to ask your doctor

Take this sheet with you to your next doctor visit.

### Questions about managing other diseases and heart failure:

You may want to ask your doctor these questions:

- Are there medicines another doctor may prescribe that could cause problems when taken with my heart failure medicines?
- How often should I have my blood pressure checked?
- If I am diabetic, how often do I need to check my blood sugar?

Use the space below to list any other questions or concerns.