

Healthy Eating Guidelines For People with Heart Failure

Heart failure occurs when your heart isn't pumping blood strongly enough for your body to get the oxygen and nutrients it needs. In some cases fluid can build up in your lungs, kidneys, and other parts of your body. This pooling, or congestion of fluid, can cause the following symptoms:

- shortness of breath
- feeling tired
- swelling in your legs, feet and abdomen

The term 'congestive heart failure' is often used to describe heart failure with these symptoms. If you have heart failure, a healthy lifestyle can help you feel your best. Work with your health care provider to monitor your health and make changes to your medication as needed. Other members of your health care team will help you to make diet and lifestyle changes to improve your health.



Steps you can take

- Aim for less than 2000 milligrams of sodium per day. Sodium comes from salt. Most of the salt we eat is from processed foods like deli meats, frozen dinners, sauces and soups. Too much sodium makes your body hold on to extra water. This makes your heart work harder because it has to pump the extra fluid around your body. If you develop congestive heart failure you may need a lower amount of sodium.
 - See Additional Resources below for information on how to lower the sodium in your diet.
- Talk with your health care provider to find out if you need to restrict fluids. Weigh yourself at the same time every day, and on the same scale. If your weight changes quickly (more than 1.5 kg or 3 pounds in one day) you may need to restrict fluids.
- Maintain a healthy body weight.

- Use Canada's Food Guide to help you plan a healthy and well-balanced diet. Canada's Food Guide is available at www.healthcanada.gc.ca/foodguide.
- Keep physically active. Check with your health care provider first if you are not active now. Canada's Physical Activity Guide is available at www.csep.ca/guidelines.
- If you are overweight, plan to lose weight slowly, no more than ½-1 kg (1-2 lbs) each week.
 - See Additional Resources below for information on how to lose weight in a safe and healthy way.
- Include omega-3 rich foods in your diet. They may help to reduce complications of heart failure.
 - Canada's Food Guide recommends at least 2 servings of fish per week. Good choices include char, mackerel, salmon and trout.
 - Other sources of omega-3 fats include flaxseeds, canola oil, soybeans and walnuts.
 - If you are not getting enough omega-3 fats from your diet, talk with your health care provider or dietitian about an omega-3 supplement.
- Talk with your health care provider about whether you need to avoid alcohol. If your health care provider says it is okay to drink alcohol, limit it to, no more than 2 drinks a day for men or no more than 1 drink a day for women. A standard drink is equal to:
 - 341 mL (12 oz) of beer (5% alcohol)
 - 142 mL (5 oz) of wine (12% alcohol)
 - 43 mL (1.5 oz) of liquor/spirits (40% alcohol)

Other Lifestyle Tips:

- Be smoke free. Smoking makes the heart work harder and beat faster, lowers the amount of oxygen in the blood, and damages the blood vessels. To get help to quit smoking, call or visit QuitNow at 8-1-1 or www.QuitNow.ca, or talk to your health care provider.
- Try to get plenty of rest and learn ways to minimize stress.



Additional Resources

HealthLinkBC. Visit www.HealthLinkBC.ca for medically approved non-emergency health information.

- Heart Failure www.healthlinkbc.ca/kb/content/special/hw44415.html#tp17534.

Dietitian Services Fact Sheets available by mail (call **8-1-1**) or at www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthyeating.

- Healthy Eating Guidelines for Lower Sodium (Salt) Eating
- Lower Sodium (Salt) Food Choices
- Lower Sodium (Salt) Eating Resources

These resources are provided as sources of additional information believed to be reliable and accurate at the time of publication and should not be considered an endorsement of any information, service, product or company.



Notes

Distributed by:

Dietitian Services at HealthLinkBC (formerly Dial-A-Dietitian), providing free nutrition information and resources for BC residents and health professionals. Go to www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthy-eating or call **8-1-1** (anywhere in BC). Interpreters are available in over 130 languages.