



## About the Fight Against Heart Failure<sup>SM</sup> Campaign

Fight Against Heart Failure<sup>SM</sup> is an educational program designed to:

- Promote awareness of the signs and symptoms of heart failure.
- Help heart failure patients and their caregivers learn about the four key ways to manage heart failure symptoms to stay healthy and out of the hospital:
  1. Diet
  2. Exercise
  3. Lifestyle changes
  4. Medication

Visit [www.fightheartfailure.com](http://www.fightheartfailure.com) to download additional Fight Against Heart Failure<sup>SM</sup> educational materials.



[www.fightheartfailure.com](http://www.fightheartfailure.com)

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Fight Against Heart Failure<sup>SM</sup> is an educational program developed by the American Association of Heart Failure Nurses, the Preventive Cardiovascular Nurses Association, and the Society of Chest Pain Centers, and is sponsored by Scios Inc.

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# A GUIDE TO MANAGING Heart Failure Take Control



[www.fightheartfailure.com](http://www.fightheartfailure.com)



## What is Heart Failure?

Many people are confused about what heart failure means. Heart failure does NOT mean your heart has stopped or is about to stop. If you have heart failure, your heart cannot pump blood through your body as well as it should. So, you can feel tired and weak. You can also have swelling, or fluid build-up, in your legs, feet, abdomen (stomach), and lungs.

Heart failure is serious, and there usually is no cure for it. But, you can often manage the symptoms to stay healthy and out of the hospital.

### You Are Not Alone!

*Over 5 million people in the United States live with heart failure today. 550,000 new cases are diagnosed each year. Heart failure is the most common cause of hospitalization in people over 65.*

Source: *Heart Disease & Stroke Statistics – 2007 Update At-A-Glance*, American Heart Association, Dallas, Texas, AHA 2007.

## What Causes Heart Failure?

Certain illnesses or conditions can weaken the heart so it can't pump blood as well as it should. This can lead to heart failure. Common causes include:

- Coronary artery disease, or clogged arteries (the most common cause of heart failure).
- A previous heart attack (possibly the "silent" type, meaning you may not have been aware of it).
- High blood pressure, or hypertension.
- Heart valve disease or heart valve damage.
- Infection of the heart muscle.
- Alcohol abuse or heavy drinking.

It is important to know what led to your heart failure. This may help your clinician better treat you. If you don't know the cause, ask your doctor.

*In this brochure "clinician" refers to the many people who may give you medical care. This can include your doctor, nurse, physician assistant, and/or nurse practitioner.*





## Symptoms of Heart Failure

Many people with heart failure don't know that they have it. This is because they often think that common heart failure symptoms are just a sign that they are getting older. Also, many people with heart failure try to avoid symptoms. They "take it easy" or don't do things that make them feel tired or short of breath.

But if you ignore the symptoms, your heart has to work even harder. It becomes even weaker. This may cause your heart failure to get worse, even to the point where you have to go to the hospital.

So, it's important to know the common symptoms, and get treated for them.

### Keep Track Each Day

*It is important to pay attention to your symptoms and to keep track of them. Write down how you feel each day. This can help you know if your symptoms are getting worse or if you have new ones. It can also help you decide if you need to call your clinician.*

Common symptoms of heart failure include:

- Shortness of breath, which may be worse at night.
- Frequent coughing, which may also be worse at night.
- Fast heart rate or heavy heart beat.
- Feeling tired and weak.
- Swollen (puffy) ankles, legs, and/or belly, which may be worse at the end of the day.
- Loss of appetite and/or nausea.
- Weight gain.

Ask your clinician what you should do or when you should call them if your symptoms change or if you gain (or lose) weight. Then, watch your symptoms each day, and follow your clinician's guidelines closely. The sooner you get treated, the less likely you are to end up in the hospital.





## Managing Heart Failure

Your clinician will work with you to create a plan to help you manage your heart failure. The four key parts of this plan are:

1. Eat a low-salt, heart-healthy diet.
2. Get regular exercise.
3. Take your medications.
4. Make lifestyle changes:
  - Quit smoking.
  - Limit or avoid alcohol.
  - Weigh yourself daily.
  - Keep track of your symptoms.
  - Reduce stress.

Remember, four ways every day can help you Fight Against Heart Failure<sup>SM</sup>.

### Four Ways to Fight Against Heart Failure<sup>SM</sup>:

Strategy	Why it's Important
1 Eat a low-salt, heart-healthy diet.	If you limit salt, fat, and cholesterol, you may feel better. This also will help keep your heart failure from getting worse.
2 Get regular exercise.	Your heart is a muscle, and exercise can make it stronger. Ask your clinician before you start or change an exercise program.
3 Take your medications.	Medications play a key role in treating heart failure. They can also stop it from getting worse. Always take your medications as directed by your doctor.
4 Make lifestyle changes.	Watching your weight and keeping track of your symptoms can help you know if your heart failure is getting worse. You should also try to reduce stress, limit or avoid alcohol, and stop smoking.

### Take an Active Role in Your Treatment

*Ask your clinician to explain anything about the plan that you don't understand. Follow this plan closely to feel better and to stay healthy and out of the hospital. Talk to your clinician before making any changes on your own.*

