

Navigating your way around Heart Failure Treatments

For people living with heart failure



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What is heart failure?

No one likes the word failure. The Pumping Marvellous Foundation was started with the mantra to be positive around heart failure, so let's start by saying that you are not a failure. If you have been told you have heart failure, then it means that your heart is failing to pump as efficiently as it should, in order to supply the body with the oxygen and nutrients that it needs. You may hear technical terms to describe this as heart failure with reduced ejection fraction (HFrEF). There is another less common type of heart failure whereby the heart fails to relax and fill efficiently called heart failure with preserved ejection fraction (HFpEF). The question to ask your Doctor or Nurse is, "Why is my heart not working as well as it should?"

What causes heart failure?

Generally there is a reason why the heart is not pumping correctly. The most common reason is that the heart muscle has been damaged by a poor blood supply such as after a heart attack. Other causes include;

- High blood pressure
- Heart rhythm being abnormal e.g. atrial fibrillation
- A genetic condition which may have affected the muscle of the heart as in cardiomyopathy
- Excessive alcohol intake and/or recreational drugs
- Diabetes
- In rare cases a form of heart failure in pregnancy or just after delivery called peripartum cardiomyopathy
- Some types of chemotherapy
- A virus that has affected the muscle of the heart
- The valves of the heart being damaged

When it comes to treatment and care your team are very important. Your team should include:

- A Cardiologist specialising in the management of heart failure
- A Heart Failure Specialist Nurse
- GP and Practice Nurse at your GP Surgery
- Cardiac Rehabilitation Specialist
- Pharmacist

FILL THESE OUT – IMPORTANT TEAM MEMBERS:

My GP Surgery Telephone Number

My Heart Failure Nurse Team Number

Typical symptoms and what to do if they get worse



Breathlessness or increased breathlessness



Extreme Fatigue or getting more tired than you are



Fluid build-up in feet, ankles, legs and/or tummy

It is important for you to manage your symptoms. Whether the symptoms are new and are getting worse or you have the symptoms already and they are getting worse. Knowing what to do if your symptoms are getting worse means you can get help faster from the right person.

Scan this QR code with your phone or tablet to get access to our symptom checker.



Help us make heart failure clearer for everyone

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HEART FAILURE
TOGETHER

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TREATMENTS FOR HEART FAILURE

You are showing symptoms of heart failure

You have been diagnosed with heart failure

You have your health team

These are the tests, investigations and treatments to expect from your team

Blood Tests and Investigations

Several investigations may be undertaken to try and establish the underlying cause of heart failure.

Common first-line investigations may include;

- Echocardiogram
- ECG
- Cardiac MRI scan
- Angiogram
- Blood tests, including an NT-pro BNP test
- Routine blood testing to monitor your kidney function and blood count at least 6 monthly, more frequent for those with impaired renal function.

Commonly requested blood tests include;

- Urea & electrolytes (test of kidney function)
- Full blood count (test to ensure you do not have anaemia)
- BNP

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Medications for Heart Failure

Medications are used to improve/stabilise heart function in patients with heart failure.

Several medications are designed to improve/stabilise heart muscle pumping function. The type of medication used varies according to whether heart muscle pumping function is mild-moderately impaired, or more severely impaired.

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Cardiac Implantable Electronic Device

In instances where your heart function improves significantly after medication, a cardiac device may no longer be required, or may be deferred. However, up to two-thirds of patients with heart failure may benefit from a cardiac implantable electronic device. In this instance your clinical care team are likely to discuss this with you.

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Self-Management and Self-Care

How you care for yourself is an area you can very much influence. Access information to help you learn about heart failure. Join our Community of patients and families to learn about heart failure. There's nothing like talking to another person who has heart failure.

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Rehabilitation and Lifestyle

Try and keep active, ask your health team if there are heart failure rehabilitation classes in your area.

It is important to maintain a healthy diet and seek out support from your health team around any specific needs you have.

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