

Your doctor may prescribe a combination of the following medicines:

- Angiotensin Converting Enzymes (ACE) inhibitors or Angiotensin II receptor blockers (ARBs) to relax and widen blood vessels and make it easier for blood to flow
- Beta-blockers to slow the heart rate and progression of heart failure
- Aldosterone receptor antagonists to help the kidneys get rid of extra fluid
- Digoxin to improve blood circulation and lessen symptoms
- Diuretics to reduce fluid retention and swelling

Living with Heart Failure

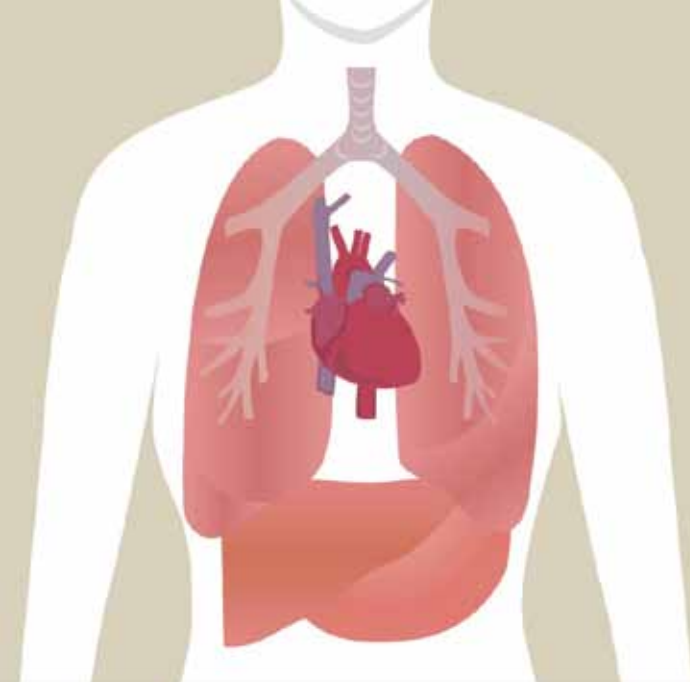
There is no cure for heart failure. But changing your lifestyle, taking your medications as directed and staying on top of your symptoms is the best way to keep heart failure in check and improve how you feel.

Speak to your doctor, nurse or ArchCare Advantage nurse practitioner/care manager if:

- You feel that your heart failure symptoms are getting worse
- You develop new symptoms
- You have trouble keeping even minor symptoms under control

If you experience any of the following, contact your doctor, nurse or ArchCare Advantage nurse practitioner/care manager right away:

- Sudden weight gain, increased swelling of your ankles, increased difficulty breathing, inability to do your usual activities, dizziness, lightheadedness, or an irregular heartbeat that lasts a long time
- Dry hacking cough, especially when you lie down or go to sleep
- Chest pain or tightness, extreme shortness of breath or the feeling you're going to pass out
- Numbness, tingling or paralysis in one side of your body, which could be a sign of stroke.



A Special Note to Family Caregivers

It can be rewarding to help a loved one with heart failure. It can also be a lot of work and take an emotional toll. Don't forget to take care of yourself, too, by taking breaks and getting help when needed from family or friends. And don't hesitate to ask questions and share your concerns with your loved one's doctor or nurse practitioner/care manager. They have a wealth of knowledge and valuable advice about caring for patients with heart failure



205 Lexington Avenue, 14th floor
New York, NY 10016
1-800-373-3177 (TTY/TDD 1-800-662-1220)
www.archcareadvantage.org

Living With Heart Failure

A Guide to Understanding Heart Failure and Taking Control of Your Health



HMO Special Needs Plan

Living With Heart Failure

What is heart failure?

Heart failure means that your heart muscle has become weakened and doesn't pump as much blood as your body needs. Heart failure does not mean that your heart has stopped or that you have had a heart attack, just that your heart is not pumping as well as it should. Because your heart cannot pump efficiently, your body tries to make up for it by holding onto extra salt and water, which creates a build-up of excess fluid. Your heart also becomes enlarged and beats faster.

Is heart failure common?

Heart failure is very common. It affects nearly five million Americans. Between 400,000 and 700,000 new cases are diagnosed each year.

What causes heart failure?

Many things can cause injury to the heart and lead to heart failure. The most common risk factors include:

- High blood pressure
- Heart attack
- Damage to heart valves
- Diabetes
- Obesity

What are the symptoms of heart failure?

The symptoms of heart failure begin to appear when your heart can't pump enough blood to the rest of your body. You may:

- Lack energy and feel weak
- Be short of breath at rest or when you exert yourself
- Wake up short of breath

- Cough or wheeze, especially when you lie down
- Feel like your heart is pounding or racing (palpitations)
- Have swelling, especially in your legs, ankles, and feet
- Gain weight from the excess fluid in your body, which can happen over just a day or two or more slowly
- Need to urinate more frequently at night

How is heart failure treated?

Research shows that a combination of lifestyle changes and medications is the best way to treat heart failure, reduce the need for hospitalization and help you live longer.

Lifestyle Changes

Changes in how you live can slow the progress of heart failure and help control other diseases like high blood pressure and diabetes that can make your heart failure worse.

- Follow your medication regimen by taking all of your prescribed medications as directed.
- Keep track of your symptoms. Contact your doctor, nurse or ArchCare Advantage nurse practitioner/care manager if you notice a sudden change in your symptoms or level of activity, or if you experience sudden weight gain.
- Eat less salt (sodium). Sodium causes your body to retain water, which makes it harder for your heart to pump.
- Try to be physically active. Your doctor can tell you what level of exercise is safe, and how to know if you are doing too much.

- Take rest breaks during the day.
- Lose weight if you are overweight. Even a few pounds can make a difference.
- Stop smoking. Smoking damages your heart and lungs.
- Limit alcohol. Ask your doctor how much alcohol, if any, is safe for you.

Speak to your doctor, nurse or ArchCare Advantage nurse practitioner/care manager before taking any new prescription or non-prescription drugs, vitamins or herbs. Some medications, such as pain relievers like Aleve or Motrin that are known as NSAIDs, can make your heart failure worse.

Medications for Heart Failure

Most people with heart failure need to take several medicines. Medications don't cure heart failure, but they can help your heart pump more effectively and control your symptoms. The right medicines can keep your heart failure from becoming worse and reduce your risk of stroke and other health problems. Taking all your medications as directed can keep you out of the hospital, make you more comfortable, and help you live as long as possible.



archcare
Advantage

HMO Special Needs Plan