



CARE OF THE HEART

HEART HEALTH NEWS FOR MVP MEMBERS

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GUARD AGAINST THE FLU— GET VACCINATED!

Flu and pneumonia pose greater dangers for people who have heart failure (or any heart condition) than for healthy people.

Pneumonia is a lung infection that keeps your body from using oxygen as efficiently as it should. Your heart has to work harder to pump oxygenated blood through the body. People with heart failure should avoid putting this extra stress on their heart.

Get Vaccinated

Ask a health care professional about getting a yearly influenza vaccine and a one-time pneumococcal vaccine (to guard against the most common form of bacterial pneumonia). Both vaccines are generally safe and seldom cause any severe reactions. It's much riskier not to have them. You might have some pain or swelling at the site of the shot (on the arm), but this will go away after a few days.

Other Tips for Staying Well

- As much as possible, avoid anyone who has a cold or the flu.

- Stay out of crowds during the height of flu season (usually October through March).
- Wash your hands thoroughly and frequently, especially after using the bathroom and before eating.
- Keep your hands away from your face.
- Insist that all caregivers wash their hands thoroughly before approaching you.

Source: American Heart Association



MANAGING HEART FAILURE

Although many cases of heart failure can't be reversed, treatment can sometimes improve symptoms and help you live longer. You and your doctor can work together to help make your life more comfortable. Pay attention to your body and how you feel, and tell your doctor when you're feeling better or feeling worse. This way, your doctor will know what treatment works best for you.

Don't be afraid to ask your doctor questions about living with heart failure. These steps can help you work most effectively with your doctor:

- **Keep track of the medications you take.** Make a list and share it with any new doctors treating you. Carry the list with you all the time.
- **Avoid certain over-the-counter medications.** Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (ibuprofen, naproxen, others), cold medications and diet pills may worsen heart failure and lead to fluid buildup.
- **Be careful about supplements.** Some dietary supplements may interfere with heart failure medications or could worsen your condition. Talk to your doctor about any supplements you are taking.
- **Keep track of your weight and bring the record to visits with your doctor.** An increase in weight can be a sign you're building up fluids. Your doctor may tell you to take extra diuretics if your weight has increased more than a pound (0.5 kilograms) or so in a day.
- **Keep track of your blood pressure.** Consider purchasing a home blood pressure monitor. Keep track of your blood pressure between doctor appointments and bring the record with you to visits.



- **Write down your questions.** Before a doctor appointment, prepare a list of any questions or concerns. For example, is it safe for you and your partner to have sex? Most people with heart failure can continue sexual activity once symptoms are under control.
- **Ask for clarification.** Make sure you understand what your doctor is saying.

Managing heart failure requires an open dialogue between you and your doctor. Be honest about whether you're following recommendations concerning your diet, lifestyle and taking medications. Your doctor often can suggest strategies to help you get and stay on track.

Source: The Mayo Clinic

Contact Us

For more information, call **1-866-765-3773**
Monday–Friday from 8:30 am–5:00 pm.

TTY: **1-800-662-1220**

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