

Achieve

A Newsletter
for AvMed
Members

▶ YOUR HEALTHIEST LIFE WITH HEART FAILURE

3 key heart failure symptoms to watch

Congestive heart failure (CHF) symptoms can be sneaky. Your body compensates for a weakening heart, so you might not notice the early red flags. Plus, heart failure progresses slowly. So you may not even realize that symptoms are getting worse. That's why self-tracking is key.

"You can reduce the risk of a hospital stay if you know the signs and symptoms of early heart failure," says Van Crisco, M.D., cardiologist at First Coast Heart & Vascular Center in Jacksonville, Florida. Here are some important red flags to keep track of:

1. Weight

When your heart is not pumping enough blood, fluid tends to build up, making your weight go up. Watch for fluid buildup by weighing yourself every morning (before you eat or drink anything). Your doctor should give you a "target range" for your weight. Call your doctor if your weight goes up suddenly or consistently rises, especially if it gets above the target range.

2. Edema (swelling)

Swelling is another sign of fluid buildup. Watch for

signs like having to adjust your belt or getting a sock indentation on your ankle. Talk to your doctor if you notice swelling, with or without weight gain.

3. Breathing

Shortness of breath, coughing, and wheezing can be signs of fluid buildup in the lungs or chest. Take note of how heavy your breathing is throughout the day and during different activities. Call your doctor if you notice increased shortness of breath, especially if it happens at rest.



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4 things you should know about diuretics

Diuretics, sometimes called water pills, may be part of your heart failure treatment. They help clear fluid buildup from the body, which can reduce swelling and shortness of breath. They act on your kidneys, making them flush out fluid as urine. You'll likely find that you need to use the bathroom more when taking diuretics. Here are a few tips to keep in mind.

Take them first thing in the morning

Since diuretics make you urinate more, it's a good idea to take them in the morning. If you take them later, you may find yourself

getting up in the night to go the bathroom.

Watch out for side effects

Diuretics can cause dehydration. They can also lower your blood potassium. This mineral is lost in urine, so peeing more can make you lose too much. Tell your doctor if you're feeling dizzy or

Care Advocate Spotlight

Laura Lippert has been with AvMed for 16 years, and a Care Advocate for the last 10 years.

"My favorite thing about being a Care Advocate is the members I am privileged to speak to and assist — and knowing that possibly I might have made someone's life a bit brighter or easier, or perhaps lessened their burden a little."



getting headaches or muscle cramps more often. Your doctor will also give you regular urine and blood tests to make sure your kidneys are working well.

Keep taking them until your doctor tells you otherwise

Even if you feel well or the swelling goes down, you should keep taking your diuretics. Stopping them or cutting back can cause those conditions to return or get worse.

Let your pharmacist know about your other medications

He or she can check to see if the diuretics will react with any other medications you're taking. Mention any over-the-counter medicines you take regularly too.



Healthy Eating Made Simple

Elizabeth Ferrer, R.D., AvMed's Registered Dietitian, shares her favorite tips for happier, healthier meals — without feeling deprived.

What's so great about the Mediterranean diet?



You've no doubt heard of the Mediterranean diet. It's been named the best diet by *U.S. News & World Report* for the past several years. And tons of research back up its health benefits, which include better heart health, less inflammation, weight loss, cancer prevention, and more.

The Mediterranean diet is more of a lifestyle change than a strict "diet" with specific rules to follow. But you don't have to live on

the Mediterranean coast to reap the benefits of this eating style. Adding some of its key principles to your day can help. Here's how:

Add more fruits and vegetables

Plant foods are the base of the Mediterranean diet. The fiber and nutrients from these foods are great for your health. Try to add vegetables to every meal. Swap dessert for fresh fruit. And experiment with meatless meals based on beans and grains instead.

Eat fish and seafood at least twice a week

Seafood has omega-3 fats and minerals that benefit heart and brain health. Instead of chicken or beef, serve fish like tuna, salmon, trout, and sardines.

Use healthy fats from plant foods

Unsaturated fats from plant foods are better for your health than saturated fats from animal foods. Swap butter for oils like olive or canola in your cooking.

Enjoy meals with loved ones

The Mediterranean diet isn't just about the food. Being active and socializing are part of the Mediterranean lifestyle too. Eat meals with family and friends, then take a stroll together after dinner.

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Mediterranean Bean Salad

Recipe



Serves 6
Prep time:
15 minutes

Ingredients

¼ cup olive oil	1 small red onion, minced
2 tbsp red wine vinegar	1 medium cucumber, chopped
1 lemon, juiced	1 cup chopped fresh herbs like mint, parsley, and/or dill
2 tsp garlic powder	½ cup crumbled feta cheese
2 cans garbanzo beans, rinsed and drained	
1 pint grape tomatoes, halved	

Directions

In a large bowl, whisk together the oil, vinegar, lemon juice, and garlic powder. Add the rest of the ingredients to the bowl and toss to combine.

Nutrition facts (per serving):

Calories 300; Fat 14g (Sat Fat 4g); Cholesterol 10mg; Sodium 360mg; Carbs 26g; Fiber 7g; Sugar 6g (including 0g Added Sugar); Protein 9g; Vit D 2µg; Calcium 130mg; Iron 2mg; Potassium 340mg