

Achieve

A Newsletter
for AvMed
Members

▶ YOUR HEALTHIEST LIFE WITH HEART FAILURE

4 essential health checks to get this year

Get a head start on the new year by scheduling these appointments to help you manage your heart failure.

1. Primary care visits

With regular checkups, your primary care provider (PCP) can track the progression of your health over the year. A checkup usually includes a routine physical, a review of medications, and questions about your symptoms.

Another time to check in with you PCP? After an emergency room or hospital visit. Follow up with your PCP within seven days of going back home.

2. Blood work

Blood tests can help monitor

your heart failure, check for side effects of medicines, and identify signs of other complications. Your PCP may order these blood tests:

- **Blood urea nitrogen (BUN) and serum creatinine**
- **Sodium and potassium**
- **Complete blood count (CBC)**

3. Imaging

These tests can check your heart function. Tests your PCP may order include:

- **Electrocardiogram (EKG or ECG):** Measures heart rhythm

- **Echocardiography (“echo”):** Checks ejection fraction, a measure of how well your heart is pumping blood

- **Stress tests:** Checks how your heart responds to exercise

- **MRI, CT, or PET scans:** Looks for damage to heart muscles or artery blockages

4. Dental exam

Studies show that people with poor oral health tend to have more heart problems. Keep your teeth and gums healthy by visiting the dentist every six months.





Building your heart failure care team

Managing heart failure can feel overwhelming at times. But you don't have to do it alone. Besides your primary care provider (PCP), you'll have a whole team of providers to help you out. "The more you interact with your team, the better the outcome," says Van Crisco, M.D. He's a cardiologist at First Coast Heart & Vascular Center in Jacksonville, Florida. Here are some of the VIPs that he recommends for your care team:

Cardiologist

This is a doctor that specializes in heart problems. He or she will

help develop your care plan and provide education on your condition.

Nurse practitioner (NP)

NPs work with your PCP or cardiologist to monitor your treatment plan, including medications, symptoms, and day-to-day activities.

Pharmacist

Your pharmacist can

educate you about your medications and potential side effects and advise about a good routine for taking your medications.

Registered dietitian (RD)

RDs can provide nutrition education and help you with dietary goals like lowering sodium and watching fluid intake.

Mental health provider

Heart failure patients can be at higher risk of depression. A mental health provider can help you deal with challenges that come with managing a chronic condition.

You

Your care team's job is to educate and support you, says Dr. Crisco. But you're the CEO of your care team. So don't be shy about advocating for yourself and asking questions.

Case Manager Spotlight

Latricia Campbell has been a Disease Management Case Manager with AvMed for two years.

"I enjoy being a Case Manager because I am able to assist our Members and make a difference in their wellbeing."



To reach us, please call 1-833-609-0735.



Healthy Eating Made Simple

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

Save time and money with these go-to healthy foods



Convenience foods often get a bad rap. You may think they're less healthy. Or they come with a higher price tag. But there are lots of packaged foods that hit the sweet spot: They're nutritious, low-cost, and easy. Here are some of my favorites:

Greek yogurt: Protein is often the most expensive part of your diet. But Greek yogurt is a great low-cost option that provides about 12 to 15 grams of protein

per serving. Individual cups are convenient for a grab-and-go breakfast.

Peanut butter: Another low-cost protein, peanut butter is also packed with good-for-you fats that will keep you full and satisfied. Other nut butters, like almond and cashew, are trendy, but they aren't any healthier. Save money by sticking with old-fashioned peanut butter.

Bananas: Whole fruits, like bananas, aren't technically

packaged foods, but they're just as convenient! And at about 25 cents apiece, you can't beat the price. Keep them on hand for breakfast, snacks, or an easy addition to a meal.

Precooked grains:

Whole grains are better for your health, but they take a long time to cook. Plain, precooked grains, like brown rice and quinoa, are a great shortcut without sacrificing nutrition.

Remember, when shopping for packaged foods, always check nutrition labels and compare prices. Watch out for sodium and added sugars, which can be higher in packaged foods. And you don't have to be brand loyal — choose whichever product has the lowest price with similar nutrients and ingredients.

Unencrypted email makes it easier to communicate with your case manager!

To opt in, scan the QR code with your phone. Log in or register to the member portal and select "Set My Preferences."



Recipe



Salsa rice and beans

Serves 6 | Prep time: 40 minutes

This is a great recipe to have on hand for busy weekdays. Leftovers are also delicious topped with a fried egg.

Ingredients

- 1 cup brown rice
 - 1 (15-ounce) can kidney beans, drained and rinsed
 - $\frac{3}{4}$ cup jarred salsa
 - 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups vegetable broth
- Optional for garnish: finely chopped fresh cilantro or parsley

Instructions:

1. Combine rice, beans, salsa, and broth in a 3- to 4-quart saucepan; bring mixture to a boil.
2. Cover, reduce heat to low, and gently simmer until rice is cooked through, about 40 minutes. Remove lid and fluff with a fork. Serve with extra salsa and chopped herbs, if desired.

Nutrition facts

Calories 175 | Fat 1g (Sat Fat 0g) | Cholesterol 0mg | Sodium 35mg | Carbs 35g | Fiber 4g | Sugar 2g (inc. 0g Added Sugar) | Protein 6g | Vit D 0 μ g | Calcium 35mg | Iron 1mg | Potassium 295mg