

Achieve

A Newsletter
for AvMed
Members

▶ YOUR HEALTHIEST LIFE WITH HEART FAILURE

Protect your heart in hot weather

Managing your fluid intake is important when you have heart failure. You need to stay hydrated, but you also want to prevent excess fluid build-up. Striking that balance can be harder in the summer. Here are a few key things you can do to maintain an ideal hydration level:

1. Weigh yourself

One way to monitor hydration is to know your dry weight. “That’s the weight at which you have enough fluid and are not dehydrated or over-hydrated,” says Van Crisco, M.D. He’s a cardiologist at First Coast Heart & Vascular Center in Jacksonville,

Florida. Talk to your doctor if you’re suddenly up or down two to three pounds in a day, or more than five pounds in a week.

2. Watch your fluids

Ask your doctor how much water you should drink. If you’re told to restrict or track fluids, let your doctor know if you’re feeling thirsty throughout the day.

3. Limit salt

Salt makes you thirstier and causes you to retain more fluid. Packaged foods and meals out are top sources of salt. “If you go

out to dinner three nights in a row, you’ll probably hold on to around five extra pounds,” says Dr. Crisco. Watch portion sizes and check sodium on labels.

4. Check medications

Ask your doctor if any of your medications should be adjusted in the summer. For example, beta-blockers slow your heartbeat, and blood needs to circulate faster to deal with the heat. Diuretics (water pills) that increase your urine may need to be adjusted to prevent dehydration.





What you need to know about ejection fraction

Has your doctor talked to you about your “ejection fraction (EF)”? It’s a measure of heart strength that is used to diagnose and monitor heart failure. “It’s important because it helps us choose therapies that improve heart function,” says Van Crisco, M.D. He’s a cardiologist at First Coast Heart & Vascular Center in Jacksonville, Florida.

An EF test measures the amount of blood inside the heart before and after each beat. A normal ejection fraction is between 50% to 70%. That means that 50% to 70% of the blood in the heart is

pumped out with each beat. An EF of 39% or less is considered heart failure with reduced ejection fraction (HFrEF). People with a normal EF can also have heart failure, known as heart failure with preserved ejection fraction (HFpEF). Approximately half of all people with heart failure have a normal EF.

Your EF helps your care team customize your care. With the right care and treatment, you can increase your EF. “Once you have EF of 40% or less, it doesn’t mean you’re destined to have that forever,” says Dr. Crisco. For example, a heart with EF at 30% can rise to 50% with the right medication and treatment of any specific issues, such as arrhythmias, valve problems, or coronary disease.

It takes two to four months for heart function to improve, so your provider may do a follow-up test after four to six months. Or your doctor may simply monitor your symptoms. “If you’re getting better and requiring less medicine, it’s very likely that your EF has improved,” says Dr. Crisco.

Case Manager Spotlight

Donna Lynn has been with AvMed for almost two years and a Registered Nurse for 22 years.

“My favorite thing about being a case manager is meeting our members where they are in life and being a part of their journey of managing their condition and achieving their health goals.”





Healthy Eating Made Simple

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

What to snack on?

Fiber and protein are the keys to a satisfying snack. These nutrients help keep you full. And, when paired with carbs — like fruit or crackers — they lessen the impact on blood sugar.

Look for packaged snacks that are lower in salt and added sugar. Trail mix, peanut butter crackers, or a granola bar are healthier options with protein and fiber.

Or try one of these simple, DIY snacks:

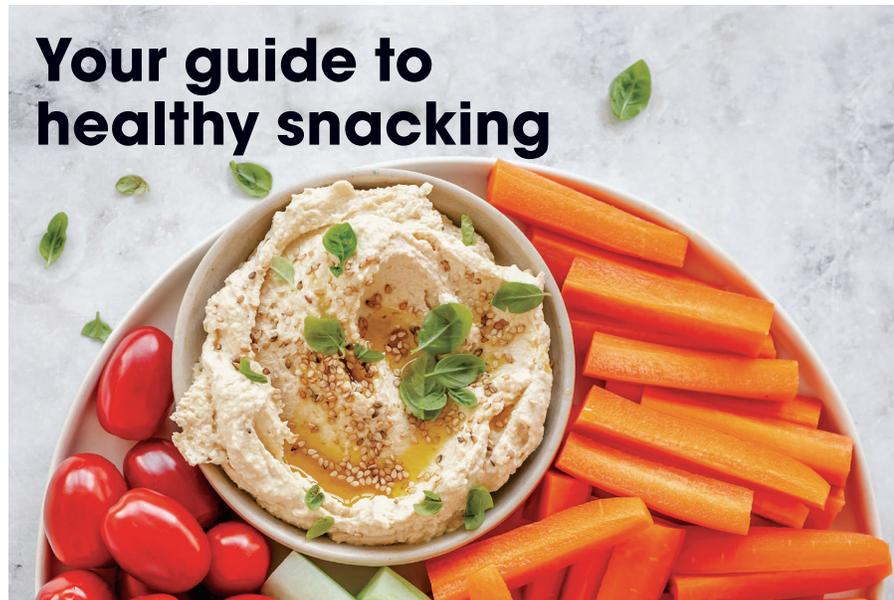
**½ cup cottage cheese
+ ½ cup sliced peaches
(120 calories)**

**¼ cup hummus
+ ½ cup baby carrots
(125 calories)**

**1 tbsp nut butter
+ 1 apple (200 calories)**

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."



Your guide to healthy snacking

You know you need three square meals a day — but what about snacks? The truth is snacks are not a mandatory part of a healthy diet.

In fact, if you're trying to lose weight, cutting out snacks can be a good place to start. But if you tend to get a bit hungry between meals, add a small snack (100 to 200 calories) so you're not starving (and prone to overeating) when your next meal comes around.

If you're trying to gain weight or are struggling to eat enough calories (for example, if you have COPD), adding high-calorie snacks (300 to 500 calories) like nuts, avocado, and Greek yogurt can help you meet your goals.

Snacks can also help if you have diabetes. Blood sugar-lowering medicines can cause hypoglycemia if you go too long without eating. Small snacks can help keep your blood sugar in range.

Recipe



Chocolate Peanut Butter “Nice Cream”

Serves 2 | Prep time: 5 minutes

Frozen bananas blend into an ice cream-like treat with no added sugar or dairy.

Ingredients

2 ripe bananas, frozen
2 tbsp no-salt-added peanut butter
1 tbsp unsweetened cocoa powder

Nutrition Info

Calories 171 | Fat 9g (Sat Fat 2g) | Cholesterol 0mg | Sodium 5mg
| Carbs 19g | Fiber 3g | Sugar 12g (inc. 0g Added Sugar) | Protein
5g | Vit D 0µg | Calcium 15mg | Iron 1mg | Potassium 340mg

Directions

Break the frozen banana into small pieces. Add to a food processor or blender with the peanut butter and cocoa powder. Blend until smooth. Serve immediately or freeze for later.

TIP:

Got bananas that are past their prime? Bananas get sweeter and softer as they ripen, so those brown, overripe bananas are perfect for this recipe. Peel them and break them into small pieces, then stash them in the freezer for later.