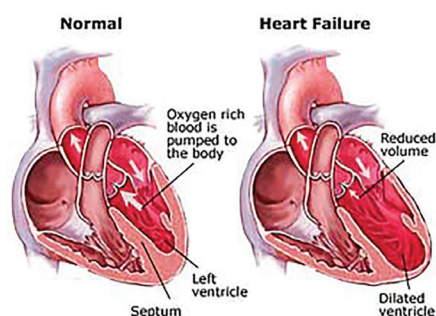


# OFP Patient Education Handout

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## HEART FAILURE



Heart failure is a condition in which the heart does not pump blood as well as it should. It is more often seen in people who are overweight, 65 years of age or older, African Americans, and people who have had a heart attack. Men have a higher rate of heart failure than women do. Common causes of heart failure include high blood pressure, diabetes, prior heart attacks, bad heart valves, damaged heart muscle, and abnormal heart rhythms. Tobacco use, drinking too much alcohol and sleep apnea also increase the risk of heart failure. Signs and symptoms of heart failure may include a buildup of fluid in the lungs, liver, abdomen, feet, ankles, and legs, shortness of breath, feeling tired, chest pain, irregular heartbeat, a persistent cough or wheezing, sudden weight gain from fluid retention, sleep disturbance, increased urination at night, lack of appetite, and nausea.

### Preventive Measures Include:

- Maintain a Healthy diet and Weight: Eat a diet that includes fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, low fat dairy products and lean proteins. If you are overweight, your doctor can help you work towards a healthy weight.
- Avoid salt in your diet: Too much sodium contributes to water retention, which makes the heart work harder and causes shortness of breath and swollen legs.
- Be active. Your doctor can help develop an exercise plan that is right for you.
- Stop Smoking! Smoking damages blood vessels, increases blood pressure, lowers the amount of oxygen in your blood and makes your heart beat faster. Avoid secondhand smoke also.
- Limit alcohol. If you have heart failure, do not drink alcohol. Alcohol can interact with your medication(s), weaken your heart muscle and increase your risk of abnormal heart rhythms. If you have severe heart failure, your family doctor may also recommend that you limit the amount of fluids you drink.
- Reduce stress and Sleep easy: When you are anxious or upset, your heart beats faster, you breathe more heavily and your blood pressure often rises. Find ways to reduce stress in your life. Spend time with family and friends. Avoid caffeine. If you have sleep problems or snore, make sure you are tested for sleep apnea.
- Consider Vaccinations: If you have heart failure, you may want to get influenza and pneumonia vaccinations.
- If you have a condition such as diabetes or high blood pressure, control your condition by taking your medications regularly as prescribed by your doctor. Before taking any OTC medications or supplements, talk to your doctor.

### Medical Care & Treatment Options:

If you have any questions about heart failure, please contact your Osteopathic Family Physician. Your doctor can diagnose heart failure by doing a physical exam along with heart, lung, and blood tests. Management includes the right treatment plan and regular visits with your doctor. Your family doctor will help you choose which drugs and treatments will work best for you. In case of any emergency, you should call your doctor or 911 right away.

**Source(s): American Heart Association, Medscape, National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, and Prescriber's Letter.**

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