



LIVING WELL WITH CONGESTIVE HEART FAILURE

Fall/Winter 2022

Exercise: Show your heart some love

Exercise is good medicine for nearly everyone. Even if you have heart failure, it can be good for you too.

Exercise may help your heart work better. You'll likely have more energy too. Your daily activities may even be easier.

To get started:

1. **Ask your doctor first.** Double-check that it's safe for you to exercise. Find out what activities are best for you. You may need to start with a supervised exercise program if you have symptoms like shortness of breath.
2. **Choose your moves.** Most activities are good for you, even many hobbies. Be sure to include things that will get your heart pumping, such as walking or swimming.
3. **Don't overdo it.** Start slowly and rest often. Even if you only walk for a few minutes each day, that's a good start. If that's too hard, you can begin with chair exercises. Over time, you'll build the strength to do more.

While exercise is important, your medicines are too. Keep taking them exactly as your doctor tells you to.

Sources: American Heart Association (www.heart.org); Heart Failure Society of America (www.hfsa.org)

It's not too late!

A yearly flu shot is the best way to protect yourself from the flu. If you haven't had yours yet, ask your doctor or pharmacist.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (www.cdc.gov)

Did you know that you may be able to get Lifeline cell service plus a smartphone at no cost to you? Go to www.MercyCareAZ.org or call Member Services at **1-800-624-3879 (TTY: 711)** and ask about the Assurance Wireless Lifeline program.



3 steps to living well with heart failure

More energy. Better breathing.

If you're living with heart failure, those are good goals to keep in sight. They'll help keep you motivated as you tackle changes that can make a big difference in how you feel.

These three steps can help you keep your disease from getting worse.

1. **Watch for flare-ups.** When your symptoms act up, call your doctor's office right away. They can help you feel better — for instance, by changing your medicine.

The sooner you call, the better your chances of avoiding a hospital stay.

2. **Weigh yourself every day.** Sudden weight gain may be an early tip-off that heart failure is getting worse. Try to step on the scale at the same time every morning — right after using the bathroom. Call your doctor if you gain:
 - Two to three pounds in one day
 - Five pounds or more in a week
3. **Go easy on fluids.** Heart failure makes it more likely that fluid will build up in your body. Ask your doctor how much to drink each day. You may need to limit salt (sodium) in your diet too.

Sources: *American College of Cardiology* (www.cardiosmart.org); *American Heart Association* (www.heart.org)

4 ways to take charge

If you have a chronic condition, take it step by step:

1. Learn all you can about it.
2. Work with your doctor on a care plan.

3. Take your medications.

4. Aim for healthy habits.

Source: *National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases* (www.niddk.nih.gov)

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Member Services: **602-263-3000** or **1-800-624-3879**
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Monday through Friday, 7 AM to 6 PM

24-hour nurse line: **602-263-3000** or **1-800-624-3879**

www.MercyCareAZ.org