

# Heart Failure

## What is it?

Heart failure is when your heart can't pump enough blood to the rest of your body. The most common causes of heart failure are heart disease, heart attack and high blood pressure.

There is no 'cure' for heart failure. But, a healthy lifestyle, education and support can help to improve your quality of life.

## What will my GP do now?

Your GP can help you learn about heart failure treatment and long-term management. Your GP will also:

- Organise suitable tests – such as blood tests, X-rays and ECGs
- Grade your heart failure
- Check your medications
- Find the cause of your heart failure and work with you to develop a treatment plan
- Give you tools and resources to help you manage your health
- Consider your fitness to drive

## What will my GP do now?

Your GP will continue to see you and check your heart health. Your GP may also suggest a cardiologist referral if treatment isn't helping, you have another condition, or you are pregnant or planning a pregnancy.

Cardiac rehabilitation is recommended for people with heart failure. Speak to your GP about a referral to a local program.

## What can I do?

Here's how you can manage your condition.

- **Keep a diary** – record your symptoms, diet and exercise
- **Ask questions** – so you know what to do in an emergency
- **Take your medication** – follow your GP's advice
- **See your GP regularly** – for heart health check-ups
- **Reduce salt** – don't add salt to your meals and avoid foods high in salt
- **Eat a healthy diet** – include plenty of fruit, vegetables, whole grains and water
- **Quit smoking** – phone 13QUIT to get started
- **Drink less alcohol** – aim for no more than one standard drink daily
- **Exercise daily** – aim to work movement into every day
- **Take steps to lose weight** – talk to your GP about how to get started
- **Get your blood pressure checked often** – your GP can do this for you
- **Limit fluids** – try to limit fluids to 1.5 litres a day to ease pressure on your heart work and lower your risk

### Keep a diary

Record your weight, swelling and any breathing changes

Tell your GP if you gain or lose more than 2kg in a few days



## When should I call an ambulance?



If you feel pain in the centre of your chest, numbness in your arm, and the pain doesn't go away when you are sitting or resting, call Triple 000 immediately

Many ambulances have ECG machines that can send the results straight to the hospital. Ambulances can also give medication to prevent a heart attack

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## What supports are available?

### Cardiac Rehabilitation

Cardiac rehabilitation coordinators at local hospitals can arrange programs to help you manage and prevent your heart disease risk factors.

- Bankstown-Lidcombe Hospital: Phone 9722 7963 or 9722 8498
- Bowral and District Hospital: Phone 4861 0290
- Camden and Campbelltown Hospitals: Phone 4654 6228
- Fairfield Hospital: Phone 9616 8153
- Liverpool Hospital: Phone 8738 3080 or 8738 3176

### Budyari Aboriginal Community Health Centre

The Budyari Aboriginal Community Health Centre provides heart health checks, education, an Aboriginal health worker, and an Aboriginal care program. Phone 8781 8020 to learn more.

The program is based at 18 Woodward Crescent, Miller NSW 2168.

### Private Specialists

Ask your GP about a referral to a private cardiologist.

## What questions could I ask my doctor?

- Am I at risk of another heart attack?*
- What grade is my heart failure?*
- What can I expect in the future?*
- How will my daily life change?*
- How can I manage my health?*
- Do I need cardiac rehabilitation?*
- Do I need medication?*
- What happens if my symptoms get worse?*

## Where can I learn more?

If you'd like to read more about heart failure, these sites can help:

- **Better Health Channel** – Congestive Heart Failure (CHF): [betterhealth.vic.gov.au](http://betterhealth.vic.gov.au)
- **Health Direct** – Salt: The Facts: [healthdirect.gov.au](http://healthdirect.gov.au)
- **Heart Foundation** – heart failure resources for patients: [heartfoundation.org.au](http://heartfoundation.org.au)
- **Heart Online Resources**: [heartonline.org.au](http://heartonline.org.au)

This information is to be viewed by someone who has received a diagnosis from their doctor. It is not designed to be used to diagnose a condition or as a substitute for ongoing medical care

Health Resource Directory factsheets are endorsed by South Western Sydney PHN's Community Advisory Committee and local GPs