



# TALKING TO YOUR DOCTOR ABOUT LIVING WHOLE-HEARTEDLY

**A guide for people living with heart failure**

Heart failure can have a significant impact on your day-to-day life, sometimes without you realising it. That's why it's important that you keep track of possible symptoms and talk about them regularly with your doctor.

This booklet will help you identify symptoms that may be related to heart failure and give you some tips for talking to your doctor.



# WHAT TO DO BEFORE YOUR APPOINTMENT

Your appointment is your chance to openly discuss how heart failure is affecting your daily life and to work with your doctor on ways to best manage it. Here's how to make the most of every visit.

## MONITOR

- It's important to regularly check your symptoms. They're the signs of the progress of your condition and your doctor needs to know about them. Symptoms can include:
  - Needing to sleep propped up on pillows
  - Shortness of breath walking upstairs
  - Swollen feet or ankles
  - Regular coughing
  - Exhaustion preventing you from doing day-to-day activities
- You can check and track your symptoms using a simple 5-question symptom tracker available from [heartfailure.com.au](http://heartfailure.com.au)
- It also helps to talk about your symptoms with your family and friends, as they may have noticed changes you missed.



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## LIST

- It's important that all the doctors you see know which medicines you're taking and medical tests you've had.
- Make a list of all your medications (including non-prescription) and their doses and take the list to your appointment. Don't forget to include any vitamins or health supplements you're taking.

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## COORDINATE

- An appointment with your doctor can be busy, and it can be difficult to remember everything you want to talk to your doctor about. Write down the questions or symptoms you want to talk about beforehand, so you don't forget on the day.
- Ask a family member or friend to accompany you so they can also stay informed about your condition, if you think this would be helpful.



# WHAT TO DO DURING YOUR APPOINTMENT

## EXPLAIN

- Tell your doctor how you're feeling and try to be specific about any changes in your symptoms. Give examples of how heart failure affects your daily life, such as:
    - I can't do day-to-day activities I used to enjoy like gardening or walking the dog due to tiredness
    - I need to sleep propped up on pillows so I can breathe at night
    - I get short of breath easily walking up a flight of stairs
    - My feet or ankles are swollen
    - I cough even when I don't have a cold
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## ASK

- Ask any questions you wrote down beforehand and be sure to write down your doctor's answers. Also make a note of anything that you don't understand. Remember, there are no silly questions when it comes to your health!
  - Some examples of questions you might want to ask include:
    - How do you think my heart failure will affect my daily activities like gardening or walking the dog?
    - What can I expect with my heart failure over the months and years?
    - What can I do now to help improve my condition?
    - What are the possible side effects of my medicines?
    - If my other conditions affect my heart failure, what can I do?
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## PLAN

- Work with your doctor to plan 1 to 3 things you can do before your next appointment that will help you manage your condition and help you look after yourself.





# WHAT TO DO AFTER YOUR APPOINTMENT

## REVIEW

- Review your notes and the answers to your questions.  
This will remind you of any next steps you should take.
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## DISCUSS

- Update your family or friends about your appointment.  
Doing so makes sure they're better able to support you with your next steps.
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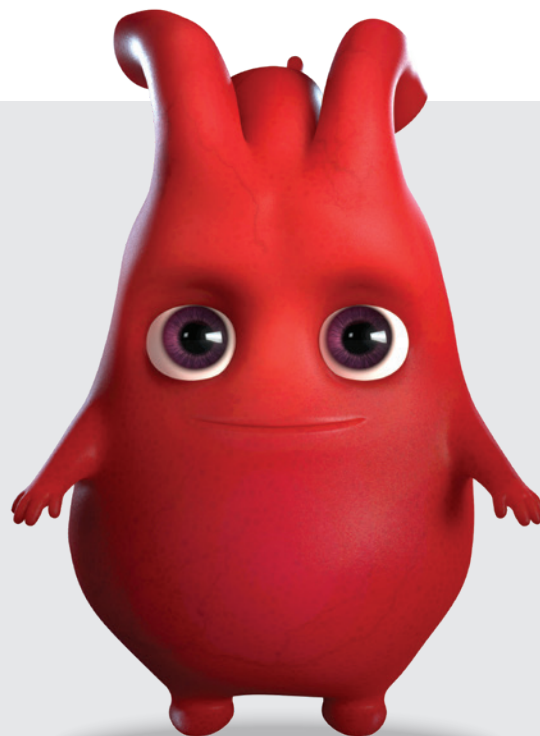
## REMEMBER

- Take a few moments after your appointment to jot down  
any reminders or points to discuss at your next visit.



## HEART FAILURE IS A CHRONIC CONDITION.

So, it's important you keep your regular appointments with your doctor. Talking about your symptoms with your doctor can help them work with you to manage your condition.







# TIPS FOR LIVING WHOLE-HEARTEDLY

Making some changes to your lifestyle or continuing with good habits can help make sure you can live wholeheartedly. Talk to your doctor about how making these changes may help you.



## ACTIVITY

Every muscle responds well to exercise – your heart is no different. Talk to your doctor about exercise that is suitable for you. In the meantime, listen to your body – pace yourself and don't push yourself too hard.



## DIET

Ask your doctor for advice or tips on how to stay healthy and manage your weight. You may find that eating smaller meals more frequently helps, as digesting small amounts of food may put less strain on the body and the heart.



## SALT

Keep an eye on your salt intake. We know that salt can affect how your body retains fluid, which can also put a strain on the heart. Try to choose meals with a low salt content and limit the amount of table salt you add to meals.



## SMOKING

Smoking is not recommended, especially if you have been diagnosed with heart failure. If you do smoke, consider discussing cutting back or quitting with your doctor.



## ALCOHOL

Aim to reduce your alcohol consumption, and make sure you keep your fluid intake within any limits set by your doctor.

For more information on living with heart failure speak to your doctor and visit the website [heartfailure.com.au](http://heartfailure.com.au)

The Heart Foundation also has a wealth of resources, information and support services. These are available at [heartfoundation.org.au](http://heartfoundation.org.au)

