

**Taking care with Heart Failure**

Your heart is a muscle. If your heart is not pumping as well as it should, then it cannot keep up with your body’s need for oxygen especially during exercise. In most cases, heart failure cannot be cured, but taking medicines and changing some everyday habits may help you feel and function better.

Other names for heart failure are congestive heart failure or CHF. The term “Chronic Heart Failure” is used to describe heart failure as a long term condition.

When you have a long-term condition, such as heart failure, it’s important to take care of yourself and follow the advice of your GP practice and consultants so you can prevent your condition from worsening or getting complications. This guide will help you to know what you should be doing, and what to do if you start feeling worse. Our aim is to ensure that you get the care you need, when you need it. We want you to be able to look after yourself and know your warning signs, so that you don’t end up in an emergency situation.

**Treatment**

Heart failure is usually treated with healthy lifestyle changes and medication.

It is very important that you take your medicine regularly as it has been prescribed, unless side effects occur. If you do not take your tablets regularly your heart failure may get worse.

Symptoms that may indicate your heart failure is getting worse include:

* You may find it more difficult to breath;
* You may wake up at night feeling more breathless;
* Your ankles may start to swell;
* You might notice rapid weight gain – 2/3 kilos or 4/6 lbs over 3 days.

**When to get medical advice**

You should already be having regular contact with your health care team. If your symptoms start to get worse or you develop new symptoms between your check-ups, **contact your GP or care team early**. You should only go to A&E if you are having significant difficulty breathing.

Remember you can access GP services 24 hours a day, seven days per week. If you need to speak to a GP out of hours, then phone NHS 111 and they will arrange for you to speak to a professional.