



Heart Failure & Nutrition

Heart failure occurs when the muscles of the heart weaken and can no longer pump blood efficiently to the rest of the body. This may lead to shortness of breath, fatigue, chest pain, loss of appetite, changes in heart beat, liver and/or kidney problems, and fluid retention (edema).

Monitoring the amount of **sodium**, **fluid**, and **caffeine** in the diet may help manage heart failure.

Sodium (also known as salt):

- Consuming too much sodium may cause the body to hold on to more fluid and increase the amount of blood the heart must pump.
- General dietary recommendation is to limit sodium to 2000 mg a day.
- Read food labels, and choose foods that are low in sodium.
 - Choose foods with less than 150 mg sodium per serving.
- Avoid table salt and processed foods such as soups, ham, cheese, sauerkraut, marinara sauce, potato chips, and certain condiments.
- Some foods one would not expect to be high in salt are:
 - Cottage cheese, baked beans, potato salad, au gratin potatoes, creamy salad dressing, some cereals, tomato juice, and breads.
- Rule of thumb is to choose the least processed form of a food as possible (e.g., fresh tomatoes instead of store bought tomato sauce).
- Even if you are taking a diuretic or water pill, it is still important to limit sodium.



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Fluid:

- If too much fluid is present in the body, it may accumulate around the heart, in the lungs, in the legs, in the hands, and/or the abdomen.
- A doctor may recommend a decrease in fluid intake to prevent accumulation of fluid in the body.
- Fluids include all beverages, ice, soup, ice cream, gelatin, some fruit, popsicles, sherbet, and anything that turns to liquid at room temperature.
- The amount of fluid that should be consumed varies from person to person, and should be discussed with a doctor.
- Eating the right amount of sodium can prevent feelings of thirst and consumption of excessive fluids.

Caffeine:

- Caffeine causes the heart to beat faster, which makes it work harder than it needs to. Foods high in caffeine include regular coffee, regular tea, regular or diet soda with caffeine, energy drinks, and chocolate.



When at home, weigh yourself daily to watch for changes in weight. A sudden increase in weight may indicate your body is holding onto excess fluid, while a sudden loss may indicate your body is losing too much fluid. If this happens, contact your doctor.

Check with a dietitian or doctor for your specific dietary needs.

Additional Notes: