Care of the Heart
A Special Newsletter for MVP Members
Eating a Healthy Diet

Why is diet important in the treatment of heart failure?

Diet is critical in the treatment of heart failure. Limiting sodium is typically recommended to limit fluid build-up. But some other nutrients or substances also play a role as well. Heart failure can become more severe if diet and medicine recommendations for heart failure are not closely followed. Medicine and diet therapy are most effective when used together in the treatment of heart failure.

Taking your medicines and following the diet your doctor has recommended for you will make it easier for you to breathe and help you feel better and be able to do more of your normal daily activities. A registered dietitian can help you make needed dietary changes by providing meal-planning guidelines that are realistic and specifically tailored to your individual needs and preferences.

Ask your doctor if a cardiac rehab program is right for you. Rehab can give you education and support that help you build new healthy habits, such as limiting sodium and eating heart-healthy foods.

Why do you need to limit sodium or fluid?

Sodium
Sodium causes your body to hold on to extra water. This may cause your heart failure symptoms to get worse. Eating too much sodium can even trigger sudden heart failure.

Limiting sodium may help you feel better and prevent sudden heart failure.

Your doctor will tell you how much sodium you can eat each day. You may need to limit sodium to less than 2,000 mg daily.

Fluid
Fluid intake is not routinely restricted. It may be restricted in advanced cases to maintain your body’s electrolyte balance. Closely following your low-sodium diet will help to decrease or eliminate the need for fluid restriction. It is very important that you watch for any signs of fluid gain (swelling or increase in body weight) and report them to your doctor.

Do you need vitamin or mineral supplements?

You can usually get all of your vitamins and minerals by eating a heart-healthy diet that is rich in fruits and vegetables.

Your doctor might recommend a multivitamin/mineral supplement if you are undernourished or cannot completely meet your nutritional needs through food.

If you take a diuretic (water pill) for heart failure, this medicine might change your dietary needs for potassium, magnesium, calcium, and zinc. Ask your doctor if you should take supplements or eat certain foods to get enough of these minerals.

Fish oil (omega-3 fatty acid) supplements have been shown to help some heart failure patients.

Talk to your doctor before you take any over-the-counter medicine or supplement. They are used along with medical treatments for heart failure, not instead of treatment.

Potassium
If you take a diuretic, ask your doctor if you need to take a potassium supplement or if you need to watch the amount of potassium in your diet. If you take a loop diuretic or thiazide diuretic, your doctor may suggest that you get extra
MVP has online resources available 24 hours a day to help you take charge of your health.

Make informed decisions about your health by using the Healthwise® Knowledgebase—our online Health Encyclopedia. Curious about the medications you take every day? Visit mvphealthcare.com and select Members, then Health & Wellness. The MVP Healthwise Knowledgebase is your one-stop resource for the latest health information.
Quick Tips for Being Prepared to Talk to Your Doctor

Patients who have good relationships with their doctors are more satisfied with their care and have better results. Here are some tips to help you and your doctor become better partners in improving your health care:

• Write down your questions before your visit. List the most important ones first to make sure they get asked and answered.

• Bring a “health history” list with you, and keep it up to date.

• Always bring any medications you are taking, including over-the-counter, or a list of those medications (include when and how often you take them) and what strength.

• You might want to bring someone along to help you ask questions and remember the answers.

• Find more information and printable forms at mvphealthcare.com.

Source: Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ)