

Heart Failure and Chronic Heart Disease Care

Watching symptoms early and supporting daily routines

Easy guide for families

Why this matters

Heart failure can cause fluid buildup, shortness of breath, fatigue, swelling, and reduced activity. Caregivers help by tracking symptoms, following the care plan, and responding early when breathing or swelling worsens.

What you may notice

- Shortness of breath with activity or when lying down
- Swelling in feet, ankles, legs, or belly
- Fast fatigue or reduced stamina
- Cough, especially at night
- Sudden weight gain if daily weights are ordered

Daily care at home

1. Follow the medicine, fluid, and low-salt plan from the care team.
2. Elevate legs when resting if the care team advises it.
3. Plan activity with rest breaks and avoid overexertion.
4. Watch for swelling, cough, poor appetite, and sleep changes.

When to call the doctor

- More swelling, cough, or tiredness than usual
- Weight gain outside the care plan
- Dizziness or low blood pressure symptoms
- Trouble taking medicines or following diet restrictions
- New confusion, poor appetite, or less urine

Call 911 now if...

- Severe shortness of breath at rest
- Chest pain, pressure, or fainting
- Blue lips, severe weakness, or confusion
- Sudden severe trouble breathing when lying flat

Questions for the care team

- What amount of weight gain should prompt a call?
- How much fluid and salt is allowed each day?
- Which symptoms mean the condition is getting worse?
- Would palliative support help with symptoms and planning?

Quick daily checklist

- Medicines taken
- Weight checked if ordered
- Breathing and swelling observed
- Fluids tracked if needed
- Rest breaks planned
- Symptoms written down

Safety first

Small changes can matter. Early action for extra swelling, faster breathing, or weight gain may prevent an emergency visit or hospitalization.

Caregiver reminder

Heart failure care is often about noticing changes early. A small notebook or phone note can make trends easier to spot.

