

# Health care tips

## Medications for heart failure

### What is heart failure?<sup>1</sup>

Heart failure is when your heart has trouble pumping enough blood through your body. It's sometimes called congestive heart failure, or CHF. Heart failure can make it hard for you to breathe and make you feel tired. Your body may also hold extra fluids, which causes swelling.

### What can I do to help control my heart failure?<sup>1</sup>

- Track your blood pressure, heart rate and changes in your weight.
- Eat heart-healthy foods low in fat, cholesterol and salt.
- Increase your physical activity. But first, talk with your doctor.
- Find ways to relax and lower your stress.
- Avoid or limit caffeine, alcohol and smoking.

### What medications can I take to control heart failure?<sup>1-3</sup>

There are several types of medications you can take for heart failure. Each one helps the heart pump blood. You may need to take one or more of these types of medication:

- Angiotensin-converting enzyme inhibitor (ACEI or ACE inhibitor): ACE inhibitors lower your blood pressure and reduce the amount of work your heart has to do.
- Angiotensin receptor blocker (ARB): ARBs work similar to ACE inhibitors. They lower your blood pressure and reduce the amount of work your heart has to do.
- Angiotensin receptor-neprilysin inhibitor (ARNI): ARNI contains two active ingredients (ARB and neprilysin inhibitor) that work in different ways. They lower your blood pressure, reduce amount of work your heart has to do, relax the blood vessels, and decrease the fluid in your body. They work together to make it easier for your heart to do its job.
- Beta-blocker: Beta-blockers lower your blood pressure and slow your heartbeat. They help your heart pump with less effort.

### What are the next steps?

Talk to your doctor about taking heart failure medications. Here are some questions to ask:

- Should I take an ACE inhibitor, ARB, ARNI or beta-blocker?
- Which of these medications will work the best for me?
- What are the side effects of these medications?

**National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute** | [nhlbi.nih.gov](http://nhlbi.nih.gov)

**American Heart Association** | [heart.org](http://heart.org)

<sup>1</sup> Heart Failure. American Heart Association website. [heart.org/en/health-topics/heart-failure/what-is-heart-failure](http://heart.org/en/health-topics/heart-failure/what-is-heart-failure) Accessed January 23, 2020.

<sup>2</sup> Yancy CW, Jessup ML, et al. 2016 ACCF/AHA Focused Update on New Pharmacological Therapy for Heart Failure: An Update of the 2013 ACCF/AHA Guideline for the Management of Heart Failure. *J Am Coll Cardiol.* 2016; S0735-1097(16)33024-8. doi:10.1016/j.jacc.2016.05.011.

<sup>3</sup> Medications Used to Treat Heart Failure. American Heart Association website. [heart.org/HEARTORG/Conditions/HeartFailure/%20PreventionTreatmentofHeartFailure/%20Heart-Failure-Medications\\_UCM\\_306342\\_Article.jsp#.XioO32hKiUk](http://heart.org/HEARTORG/Conditions/HeartFailure/%20PreventionTreatmentofHeartFailure/%20Heart-Failure-Medications_UCM_306342_Article.jsp#.XioO32hKiUk) Accessed January, 23, 2020. The information in this educational tool does not substitute for the medical advice, diagnosis or treatment of your physician. Always seek the help of your physician or qualified health provider for any questions you may have regarding your medical condition.