

Achieve

A Newsletter
for AvMed
Members

▶ YOUR HEALTHIEST LIFE WITH HEART FAILURE

5 Simple Ways to Manage Fluid Buildup

When you have heart failure, your heart isn't able to pump blood and oxygen as effectively as your body needs. One of the potential consequences: Blood and fluid can back up in your feet, legs, abdomen, and lungs, leading to swelling (aka edema). When that happens, it can be a sign that your heart failure may be getting worse.

But there's a lot you can do to treat heart failure and keep your fluid levels in a healthy range.

Sticking to your treatment plan can help you live a longer, happier, more active life.

"Often, it's the small things that make all the difference," says Steven Furr, M.D., a member of the board of directors of the American Academy of Family Physicians. And those things usually include taking your medications and making some healthy changes.

Here's your step-by-step guide

Weigh yourself daily. This is essential for monitoring your fluid levels. To get the most accurate measurement:

- Use the same scale at the same time daily.
- Weigh yourself while undressed.
- Weigh yourself after urinating but before eating. *(Continued)*



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Know your “dry weight.”

This is your weight when you don't have extra fluid. Your doctor will give you this number at every visit.

Record your weight daily and alert your doctor to changes as directed. Even a few extra pounds can be worth a call.



Check your medications.

Many over-the-counter (OTC) and prescription medications can cause or worsen edema, says Dr. Furr. Common culprits: single-dose steroid shots, antibiotics, blood pressure medications, and even OTC anti-inflammatories.

Your doctor may be able to adjust your dose or suggest an alternative. Sometimes swelling goes down once you adjust

to the medication. Your doctor will guide you on whether it's safe to wait before making a change.

Cut the salt. The salt in your diet is a big cause of edema. “Most Americans get too much salt in their diet,” Dr. Furr says. In fact, most people eat about a thousand milligrams more salt than we should each day. Read “7 Ways to Break a Salt Habit” on the next page for tips.

Hydrate the right way.

Drinking too much can increase swelling and shortness of breath. Speak with your provider about the ideal amount of fluids to consume daily.

Other ways to quench your thirst — without downing extra water — include chewing sugar-free gum, sucking on ice chips, snacking on frozen grapes, and rinsing your mouth with cold water and spitting it out.

Stick to your treatment plan. Medications called diuretics, or “water pills,” help your body get rid of extra fluid so your heart can pump more efficiently. They can relieve edema within hours or days. If your doctor prescribes a diuretic for you, take it exactly as directed.

When to Call Your Doctor

If you notice these signs of edema, call your doctor right away:

- Shortness of breath
- Trouble breathing
- Persistent coughing or wheezing
- Frequent urination, especially at night
- Belly pain or tenderness
- Very fast, slow, or unsteady heartbeat
- Abdominal swelling
- Swelling on one side of your body

We're Here for You

Your Case Manager can connect you to the resources you need. Just call **1-833-609-0735**.



Healthy Eating Made Simple

Elizabeth Ferrer, R.D., AvMed's registered dietitian, shares her favorite tips for happier, healthier meals — without feeling deprived.

7 Ways to Break a Salt Habit

Healthy eating is all about balance, especially when it comes to sodium (aka salt). It keeps your fluid levels just right and helps transmit electrical signals throughout your nervous system. But too much can make you retain water, raise blood pressure, contribute to heart disease and stroke, and damage your kidneys or liver.

Here are my seven favorite strategies for eating less salt. Try a couple of them each week. Done consistently, they can have a big impact. After a few weeks, you won't miss the shaker!

1 Eat more fresh fruits and veggies. They're naturally low in sodium

and loaded with nutrients. Choose frozen veggies with no added sauce.

2 Say no to processed foods like ramen noodles, macaroni-and-cheese kits, and packaged frozen dinners.

3 Buy fresh meats and avoid processed ones like bacon, lunch meats, and hot dogs — they're super high in sodium.

4 Cook creatively. Instead of using salt, try a squeeze of lemon or lime juice or a splash of vinegar. Experiment with new spices and herbs.

5 Choose lower-sodium condiments. They may have up to 96% less sodium than regular varieties. Read food labels to find low-sodium options.

6 Be smart when you eat out. Restaurant portions can be huge — and high in sodium. So cut your salt and calories in half by sharing a plate with a friend or taking half your dinner home. Ask your server how dishes have been prepared and see if the chef can cook your meal with less salt. If your entrée comes with sauce, request it on the side, then use it sparingly.

7 Snack wisely. Try to just say no to chips and pretzels. Instead, reach



for dried fruit or lower-sodium cheeses. Longing for something crunchy? Try fresh fruit or veggies, like a carrot or an apple. You'll be glad you did.

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health support as well as substance use concerns. Members can choose from more than 8,600 Florida-based psychiatrists, psychologists, and other mental health counselors.

Members can even download **Sanvello**, an

app that can share strategies for dialing down symptoms of stress, anxiety, and depression — anytime. These powerful tools are there for Members whenever symptoms come up.

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