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## **Understanding HFpEF:**

A Guide to Heart Failure With Preserved Ejection Fraction



# Understanding heart failure with preserved ejection fraction

**If you are living with heart failure, remember that you are not alone.**

This brochure is designed to help you better understand what heart failure with preserved ejection fraction (HFpEF) is, explain important medical terms, recognize signs and symptoms you may experience, and provide tips for managing your condition.



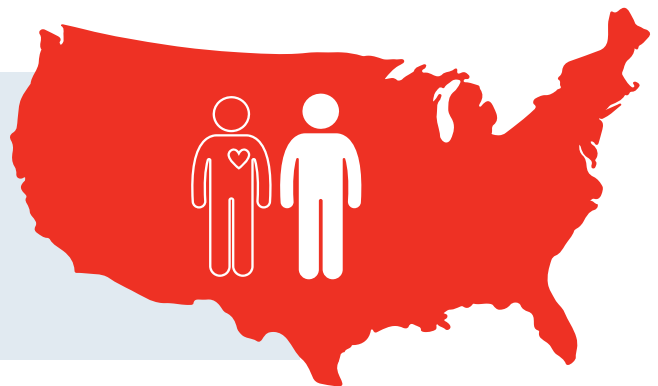
## What is heart failure?

Heart failure occurs when the heart is unable to pump enough blood to meet the body's requirements. It can happen suddenly (acute) or develop over time (chronic). Acute heart failure needs urgent attention because symptoms appear fast and are severe. Chronic heart failure lasts a long time with symptoms that come and go. However, with appropriate care, both can be managed.



## Did you know:

Approximately, 6.7 million people in the United States have been diagnosed with heart failure and 1 in 2 people with heart failure are living with HFpEF.



## What is HFpEF ?

Heart failure with preserved ejection fraction (HFpEF) happens when your heart muscle becomes stiffer and thicker than normal. This makes it more difficult for the heart to relax and fill with enough blood. HFpEF can cause you to feel out of breath, or have swelling in areas like your stomach and legs. Your doctor or healthcare professional might talk to you about your heart's 'ejection fraction,' which can help them to understand if you have or are at risk for HFpEF.

## What is ejection fraction?

Ejection fraction measures how well your heart pumps blood out to your body. A higher number usually means your heart is working well. A lower number means your heart might be struggling to meet your body's needs.



In a healthy heart, the ejection fraction number (how well your heart pumps blood) is usually **55-70%**.



In HFpEF, the ejection fraction value seems normal (**50% or more**); however, the heart still struggles to meet the body's needs as the heart muscles are stiff and thick.

Currently, there is no cure for HFpEF. The good news is that, recently, more treatments for HFpEF have become available to effectively manage the disease.

Treatment usually includes lifestyle changes and managing symptoms and other health problems that can make HFpEF worse.

You will work closely with your doctor or healthcare professional to create a treatment plan that suits you. Proper treatment can help you feel better and improve quality of life.



# Recognizing HFpEF

The below symptoms can vary from person to person. It is important to consult with your doctor or healthcare professional for a proper diagnosis and treatment plan.

## Signs and symptoms you might experience



Shortness of breath when active or lying down



Swelling in the legs, ankles, feet, and stomach



Extreme tiredness or weakness



Lightheaded/dizziness



Difficulty in exercising

## Signs of worsening (when to get help)



Increased shortness of breath when active or lying down



Increased swelling in the legs, ankles, feet, and stomach



Need to use pillows or sit upright for easier breathing and better sleep



Sudden weight gain (3 lb/day or 5 lb/week)



Frequent hospitalizations

**Take action** | **Call your doctor or healthcare professional as soon as possible**

## Emergency



Severe difficulty breathing while at rest



Sudden confusion or dizziness



Chest pain

**Emergency** | **Call 911 immediately or go to hospital!**



# What symptoms are you experiencing?

Complete this simple checklist with your caregiver and bring it along to your next visit to the doctor or healthcare professional. This will help them have a clear picture of what you are experiencing.

	Often	Some of the time	Not at all
Shortness of breath (at rest, during activity, when lying down, or all)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Swelling (legs, ankles, feet, or stomach)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Feeling tired or weak at all times	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Feeling lightheaded or dizzy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rapid changes in weight	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Increased heart rate	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Chest pain or tightness	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Other symptoms not listed

# Living with HFpEF

Living a heart-healthy lifestyle can be simple and rewarding! As we get older, it is important to keep an eye on our heart health, especially if we have conditions like high blood pressure or diabetes. Women, in particular, are more prone to heart concerns like HFpEF, and making a few changes to our daily habits can make a big difference. Let us explore some simple steps that you can take to keep your heart happy and healthy!

## Managing your weight

Achieving and maintaining a healthy weight can feel challenging. Find a plan that works for you. It should balance calories, nutrition, and physical activity.

Below are some things you can do to stay at a healthy weight:

- Chopped fruits and vegetables make a great quick snack
- Plan all your meals. Before going to a party or eating out, think about how to make healthier choices
- If you are hungry between meals, drink a glass of water or eat a small piece of fruit
- **Track your weight:** Weigh yourself daily, ideally at the same time each day (like in the morning after using the toilet and while still in your night clothes). This helps your doctor or healthcare professional notice any changes in your weight



## Eating a nutritious, heart-healthy diet

- Eat more vegetables, fruits, fish, and healthy proteins (beans, nuts, seeds, and skinless poultry)
- Consider working with a nutritionist to receive personalized guidance



## Limiting salt (sodium) intake

Eating less salt can prevent water retention and reduce swelling, making it easier to manage HFpEF symptoms.

- Cook with herbs, spices, citrus juices, and vinegar instead of salt
- Consider fresh, frozen, or canned vegetables with no added salt or very low sodium. Rinse them before using to further reduce the sodium content



## Restricting fluid intake

People with HFpEF often need to drink less fluid. Follow your healthcare team's advice on how much fluid you should drink.

Here are some tips to help you limit your fluid intake while still enjoying what you are eating:

- Choose 100% fruit juices, whether fresh, frozen, or canned, as long as they have no added sugars
- If your mouth feels dry or you are thirsty, try adding a slice of lemon to your water for some extra flavor

## Being active

Regular physical activity is very good for your health. Plus, it can help you in other ways too:

- It can help you manage your weight, blood pressure, blood sugar, circulation, and cholesterol levels
- It can make your heart stronger and also lift your mood and energy levels. Try to be active for at least 30 minutes most days of the week



Remember, exercise can be fun – you do not have to go to the gym and work up a sweat. In fact, walking is one of the best exercises you can do.

**Talk with your doctor or healthcare professional before you start an exercise program. Ask if the program is safe for you.**

## Reducing stress

Stress and anxiety can make your heart work more and make it tougher to handle things and stay positive. Here are some easy ways to cope with it:

- Do light exercises that you enjoy
- Spend 15 to 20 minutes each day sitting quietly, relaxing, breathing deeply, and thinking of something peaceful
- Consider joining a support group, or talk to a mental health expert
- If your emotions feel too much to handle, do not hesitate to talk to your doctor or healthcare professional about ways to feel better. They are there to help you!



## Limiting alcohol intake

If you have HFpEF, talk to your doctor or healthcare professional about whether it is safe for you to drink alcohol. You might be advised to completely avoid alcohol, if it contributed to your HFpEF.

## Managing medication

- Take your medicine exactly as your doctor or healthcare professional told you to
- Keep an up-to-date list of all your medicines with you all the time. Remember, your medicines will change over time
- Use a pill box and/or set an alarm to help you remember when to take your medicines
- Never stop taking your medications without talking to your doctor or healthcare professional first
- If you forget to take your medication, do not double up. Instead, ask your pharmacist what to do if you miss a dose





# Questions to ask your doctor or healthcare professional

1. What is my goal weight?

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2. How often do I need to return to the clinic for check-ups?

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3. How much water or fluids can I consume each day?

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4. How much salt can I consume daily?

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5. Can we discuss my HFpEF medications and their common side effects?

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**Use the section below to take notes or write any additional questions you may have**

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## **Caring for your loved one**

If you are caring for someone with HFpEF, you are helping a loved one cope with a chronic condition that impacts his or her daily life. Being a caregiver for someone with HFpEF can be difficult yet manageable with the right support and care.

Here are some simple tips to help you care for your loved one with HFpEF:

- **Follow the healthcare team's advice:** Attend appointments and help track medications and symptoms
- **Encourage a heart-healthy lifestyle:** Support dietary changes, regular exercise, and stress reduction
- **Monitor symptoms:** Keep an eye on any changes in your loved one's condition and report them to the healthcare team
- **Provide emotional support:** Be there to listen and offer encouragement



Remember to take care of yourself by eating well, resting, and finding time for activities you enjoy. Your well-being is crucial for providing the best care.





## **For more information:**

**American Heart Association**

[www.heart.org](http://www.heart.org)

**CardioSmart**

[www.cardiosmart.org](http://www.cardiosmart.org)

**Heart Failure Society of America**

[www.hfsa.org](http://www.hfsa.org)

**Share this information with your family and friends to get most out of this information.**