

Living with Heart Failure: Goals for the Future

Being diagnosed with heart failure means you have a serious, long-term condition.

It also means you have the opportunity to sit down with your healthcare providers and people in your support network to create goals and plans that fit with your treatment plan to help you manage your heart failure.

Your first and most important job is to understand and follow your treatment plan.

If you have questions about your treatment plan, be sure to ask your healthcare provider. Understanding your treatment plan will make it easier for you to partner with your healthcare provider to make the best decisions about your care.

Sticking with a heart failure treatment plan will mean making changes in your day-to-day life.

You may have to change the way you eat, your activity level, the number of times you see the doctor, and the number of medications you take.

It's also important that you learn to recognize the symptoms of heart failure. These can include fatigue, being short of breath, swelling, chronic coughing, nausea, confusion, high heart rate, and other symptoms.

It may help to keep a journal of symptoms. If your symptoms become worse, you should alert your healthcare provider so you can decide what to do next. Never ignore symptoms that suddenly become worse.

It's also important to create a plan to ensure that you take your heart failure medications correctly. You may be prescribed several medications and each has its own instructions.

There are several things that may help you follow your medication plan.

A few examples include: Using a simple pill organizer to help you take your medications every day at the right time.

And taking all of your pills as prescribed.

“For working medications into my daily routine, I actually plug it into my phone so that I remind myself to take my medication. Another way that I remember to take my medicine is I’ll also have it sitting out. So that way, I’ll see it insight. You know, the saying, “Out of sight, out of mind,” that’s very true because it’s easy to forget to take it if it’s not there to be seen.”

Your treatment plan will also cover things like nutrition, how much fluid you should consume, and recommendations for physical activity.

Creating a daily or weekly schedule is a good way to manage your day-to-day activities so you can follow these important tips.

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Over time your condition can change. Planning ahead may help make these changes easier.

You may be advised to create an advance directive. This is a written document that lets people know what your wishes are for medical treatment in case you can't communicate them yourself.

Advance directives can give your family, loved ones, and support network confidence and peace of mind that your wishes are being met.

"This is for a medical situation in case an emergency arises, and I have to have somebody make decisions for me."

Throughout your treatment, it's important to communicate with your healthcare providers and support network.

A diagnosis of heart failure is serious, but it doesn't mean you can no longer set goals or have hope.

By following your plan and taking an active role in your own care, you can reduce your symptoms and continue to enjoy the people, places, and things that are important to you.