

**Table of Contents**

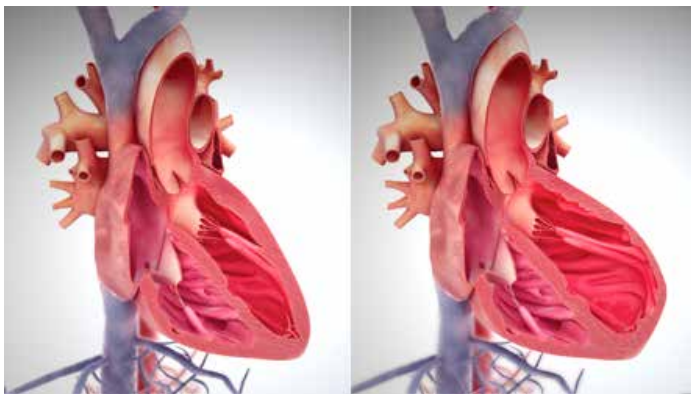
What is CHF and how does it work?	2
What is Atrial Fibrillation?	2
Why is My Diet Affected?	3
Sodium Intake and CHF	3
Fluid Intake and CHF	3
Management of Your CHF	4
Importance of Keeping a Log	4
Taking Your Medication	5
Foods with Fluid	5
Foods to Avoid	6
Flavoring Foods without Using Salt	6
The Mediterranean Diet	7
Building a Healthy Mediterranean Plate	9
Going to the Grocery Store	10
Where Do I Start	10
What is “Heart Healthy	10
“Low Sodium”, “Reduced Sodium”, “No Added Sodium”	11
Choosing Healthy Snacks	12
Reading a Food Label	13
Helpful Tips for Dining Out	14
Coping With Stress	15
Problem Solving	17
Keep Track!	18
Goal Setting	19
Additional Resources	20

## Congestive Heart Failure

### What is CHF and How Does It Work?

The heart is a muscle that pumps blood throughout your body. “Heart failure” does not mean that your heart has stopped working. It means that your heart has become weak and is not working as well as it needs to.

In Congestive Heart Failure (CHF), your heart cannot keep up with the blood flowing through your body. Blood may get backed up, or “congested”, when it tries to return to your heart.



**Healthy Heart**

**Congested Heart**

When you have heart failure, your kidneys are also affected because they receive less blood than normal. When this happens, your kidneys think that your blood pressure is low. They try to fix this by signaling to the brain to hold on to extra fluid and water.

This causes edema – where your legs, ankles, and other parts of your body swell up. Fluid may also build up in your lungs. This makes it harder to breathe and can cause you to feel short of breath.

Heart failure cannot be reversed, but with proper management you can prevent it from getting worse.

### What is Atrial Fibrillation?

Atrial Fibrillation is a serious condition and often called “A-Fib”. Many people with CHF may also have A-Fib.

Normally, your heart will pump to a regular beat. In A-Fib, the upper chambers of your heart don’t beat the way they should. Instead, they beat irregularly and too fast. When this happens, your body may not receive all of the oxygen that it needs.

A-Fib symptoms often include heart palpitations, shortness of breath, and weakness.

A-Fib can cause blood clots to form. Blood clots can stop blood from flowing to important organs. If blood is unable to flow to your brain you could have a stroke.

### Why is My Diet Affected?

In CHF the heart will make sure to send enough blood to your most important organ: your brain. This means that other organs will not receive as much blood as they need.

The kidneys are your body’s natural filter. They filter out extra vitamins, minerals, and fluid from the blood. Less blood flowing through your kidneys means that less sodium and fluid are being filtered out of your body.

When your kidneys don’t receive enough blood, they may think that your blood pressure is low – even if it is not. They will try to fix this by sending a signal to your brain to hold on to extra fluid and sodium.

You are at risk of extra fluid building up in your body, so it is important to keep track of how much salt and fluid you eat and drink. Too much sodium and fluid can make your symptoms worse and possibly cause

you to return to the hospital.

## Sodium intake and CHF

Sodium is another word for salt. Sodium acts like a sponge and holds on to fluid in your body. The more salt you eat, the more fluid your body will hold.

It is important that you limit your sodium intake to less than 2000 mg per day. You should aim for each meal to have 300-500 mg of sodium in order to reach this goal. This is to avoid making the fluid buildup in your body worse.



*1 Teaspoon (tsp) of salt contains 2,300mg of sodium. Your goal is to consume less than 2,000mg per day.*

## Fluid Intake and CHF

It is very important to keep track of how much fluid you eat and drink. Your kidneys may not get rid of extra fluid in your body.

Fluid in your lungs will make it harder for you to breathe. Fluid that builds up in your legs and arms is called edema. In edema, you may notice that you feel “puffy” or swollen - this is fluid building up under your skin. Edema can be very uncomfortable or even painful.

Talk to your doctor about how much liquid you should be consuming. Most people with CHF should aim for 68 ounces per day. This is the same as 2 liters or 8 ½ cups.

Here are some tips to help you consume less than 68 ounces per day:

- Drink only before and after meals
- Take small sips of water throughout the day
- Carry the same water bottle with you so you know how much you are drinking
- Freeze water bottles overnight and sip on them as they melt
- Avoid drinking through straws; they cause you to drink more
- Avoid foods that might make you thirsty, such as spicy foods or salty foods
- Chew gum or suck on hard candy to help with dry mouth

My goal is to consume \_\_\_\_\_ ounces of liquid per day

or \_\_\_\_\_ ounces of liquid per meal.

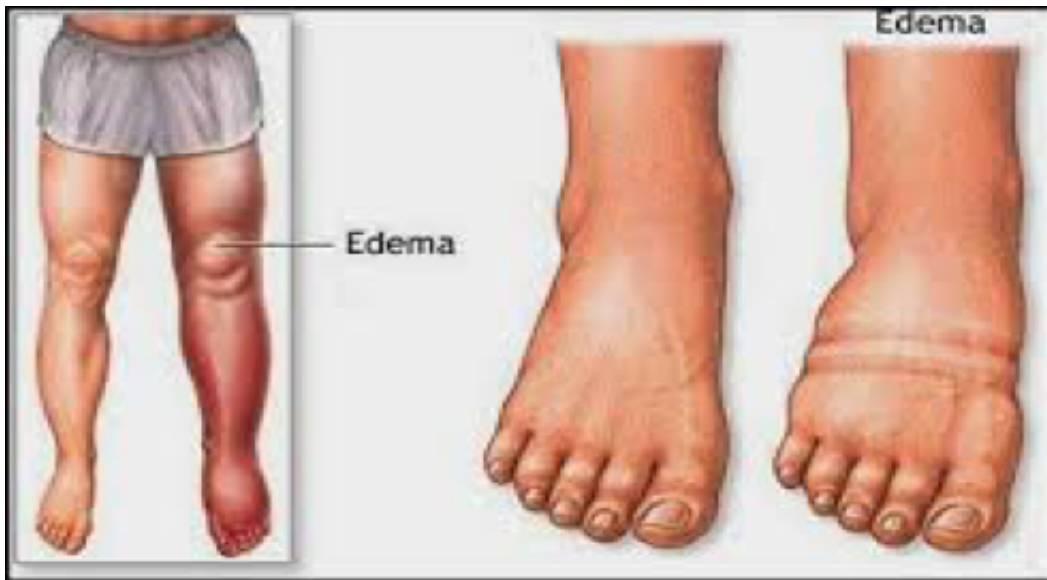
## Management of Your CHF

### The Importance of Keeping a Log

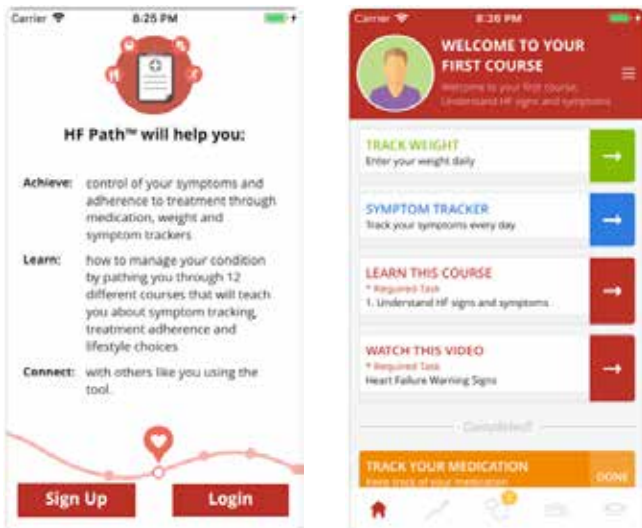
Writing down what you eat and drink every day can help you keep track of the changes you are making. Keeping a food log will help you stay within your sodium and fluid goals.

It is a good idea to weigh yourself every day. Your weight can show how much fluid you are holding on to. A weight gain of 2-3 pounds in one day or 5 pounds in one week is a sign that you are retaining fluid.

There are many ways to keep a log. You can write everything down in a journal, take pictures of your food, or use a mobile app.



HF Path is a free app that can help you stay on track. You can use this app to track your weight, medications, meals, and doctors' appointments.



## Taking Your Medication

Taking your medications as prescribed is crucial in keeping your heart healthy. Each medication has a different function in your body. These medications work together to keep fluid off, strengthen your heart, and make it easier for your heart to work.

Here are some tips on remembering to take your medications:

- Set an alarm on your phone
- Use a pill organizer and place it where you will see it every day
- Record your medications in a mobile app
- Have a friend or family member(s) remind you and keep you accountable



## Foods With Fluid

Foods that contain liquid should be counted towards your daily fluid goal. Any food that is liquid at room temperature counts as a fluid. This includes:

- Smoothies
- Ice cream, sorbet, and popsicles
- Gelatin (Jell-O) and puddings
- Soups and stews
- Milk products, including milkshakes
- Watermelon

## Foods to Avoid

There are some foods that will have a negative impact on your health due to their high salt content. These can be replaced with more nutritious options.

- Boxed dinners such as Zatarains, Hamburger Helper, and Rice a Roni
- Pre-packaged foods
- Cured and smoked meats, such as ham and bacon
- Deli meats and cheeses
- Pickling and seasoning meats
- Many types of bread
- Seasoning mixes such as Tony Chachere's and Slap Ya' Mama

- Chips and crackers
- Store-bought baked goods
- Frozen meals
- Ketchup and other condiments
- Gravy and soup mixes
- Fast food
- Sports drinks
- Canned food
- Salad dressings

*\*\*This list gives you only a few examples. Please check all food labels before deciding on an item\*\**

## Flavoring Food Without Using Salt

A low-sodium diet may feel very limited, but there are many foods that you can still eat and enjoy. Most peo-

Food Group	How Much?	Foods to Try
<b>Vegetables</b>	2-3 cups per day	Fresh and frozen vegetables are best - they have no added salt.
<b>Legumes</b>	2 cups per week	Lentils. Dry beans. "No salt added" or "low sodium" canned beans. Unsalted peanuts.
<b>Fruits and Nuts</b>	Whole Fruit: 1-1 ½ cups per day	All fresh fruits. Frozen fruit with no sugar added. Unsalted Nuts: ¼ cup per day. Unsalted nuts and sunflower seeds.
<b>Whole Grains</b>	1 ½ cups per day	Brown rice, quinoa, barley, old fashioned oats, corn. 100% whole grain bread and pasta.
<b>Fish</b>	2 four ounce servings per week	Salmon, swordfish, drum, snapper, cod, shrimp, raw oysters. Low sodium canned tuna.
<b>Oils/Fats</b>	3 Tbsp plant based oils per day	Replace butter with olive oil, safflower oil, canola oil, and sesame oil.
<b>Dairy</b>	Less than 8 ounces per day	Cheese is generally high in sodium, choose cheese with a strong flavor so you don't need to use as much.
<b>Meat</b>	1-2 four ounce servings of leaner meats per day.	Choose eggs, chicken, turkey, and lean cuts of beef and pork. Cut off visible fat. <i>Sausage, ham, bacon, deli meat, and pickling meats are all very high in sodium and should be avoided.</i>
<b>Alcohol*</b>	Women: 1 drink per day Men: 2 drinks per day	<i>*Although alcohol is included in the diet, alcohol is often not recommended for people with heart failure. Check with your doctor before consuming alcohol.</i>

ple are worried that food without salt won't taste very good. Luckily, there are many techniques you can use to add flavor to your food. Some ingredients you can use to add flavor without extra salt include:

Some ingredients you can use to add flavor without extra salt include:

- Acid, such as citrus juice or vinegar
- Fresh or dried herbs
- No sodium added spice blends
- Spice blends made at home without salt
- Marinades made at home
- Fresh aromatics such as onion, garlic, celery, and peppers
- Smoked paprika for a smoky, meaty flavor
- Foods high in Umami (a meaty, savory flavor), such as parmesan cheese, mushrooms, tomatoes, toasted nuts, and low-sodium soy sauce

Smoked peppers such as chipotle or poblano (seasoning, not canned), in red beans or cabbage for a smoky, meaty flavor

## The Mediterranean Diet

When people hear “Mediterranean Diet” they often think of hummus, feta cheese, and olives. That is not what this diet is about. It is a lifestyle and way of eating that can fit anyone's tastes.

The Mediterranean Diet is all about eating more of the foods that are good for us. This means eating more fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, seafood, and healthy fats. Dairy and meat should be consumed in moderation.

This diet is not restrictive. It does not tell you to cut anything out of your diet. The focus is on portion control and balance.

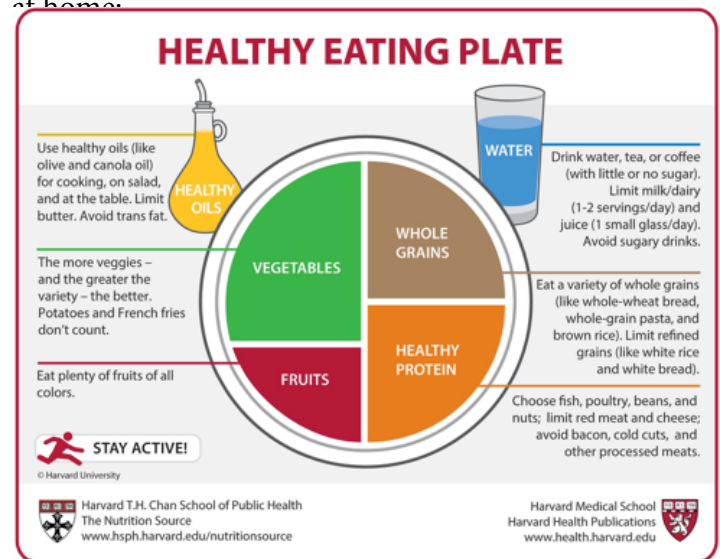
The main dietary component of CHF management is limiting how much sodium you consume. The Medi-

terranean diet limits heavily processed foods, which are generally very high in sodium. If you follow this diet by consuming more fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, and seafood you will naturally consume less salt.

Research has shown that the Mediterranean diet reduces an individual's risk of heart disease. It can also help to keep your heart failure from worsening.

## Build a Healthy Mediterranean Plate

Use this image as an example when making your plate at home.



## Going to the Grocery Store

Shopping for CHF-friendly foods can be intimidating, especially if you are used to someone else shopping for you.

The first step is to have a plan! By taking the time to plan out your meals for the week you will spend less time and less money at the store. If your house is full of good food you will be less tempted to go out to eat.

It can be helpful to have a few go-to recipes with ingre-

dients that you always have on hand. This way you can quickly create a meal without much thought.

You may also want to try keeping a list of low-sodium foods that you enjoy. Bring this list with you to the grocery store so you can quickly pick items that will be a good option for you.

## What is "Heart Healthy?"

The American Heart Association (AHA) has their own Heart-Check Certification for foods that meet their sodium recommendations.

Always check for the AHA logo. Companies often create their own "Heart Healthy" logo for foods that may not be low in sodium.

While picking products with the AHA Heart-Check can be a good start, it is important to always read food labels so you can keep track of how much sodium you are eating.

## Sodium Claims on Food Labels

Food labels can be confusing. Many products make claims about their nutrition, like "low sodium" or "reduced sodium". Many of these terms are strictly regulated, and it is helpful to know what they mean.



### "No Sodium Added"

No salt is added during processing. This does not mean the item is sodium-free.



### "Low Sodium"

140mg of sodium or less per serving.



### "Reduced Sodium," "Less Sodium," or "Lower Sodium"

At least 25% less sodium than the regular product. This can still be a lot of salt if the original product was very high in sodium.

### "Light in Sodium/Lightly Salted"

At least 50% less sodium than the regular product.

## Choosing Healthy Snacks

Most people prefer either salty snacks or sweet snacks. If you like to snack on salty foods you may feel like you are out of options.

Luckily, many foods now come in a low-sodium or salt-free version. Keep in mind that homemade snacks will always be healthier and lower in sodium.

Some snacks to try include:

- Homemade popcorn with a salt free seasoning blend of your choice
- Hummus with baby carrots or low-sodium crackers
- Homemade tuna salad with low-sodium crackers
- Apples with peanut butter
- Fresh or salt-free salsa with unsalted tortilla chips
- Roasted chickpeas

## Healthy Tips for Dining Out

Eating out can be difficult when you are watching how much salt you eat. Foods from restaurants, fast-food, corner stores, delis, cafeterias, and buffets are very high in sodium. You should avoid eating out more than twice per month.

## Plan Ahead

Try to plan the restaurant and the meal you are going to have ahead of time. Many restaurants will have nutrition information for their menu items online.

It can help to make a list of foods from your favorite restaurants that are not too high in sodium. Try to keep your entire meal under 500mg of sodium.

## How to Order

Once you decide upon the restaurant, follow these helpful tips when ordering:

**Ask your server how big the portion size is.** If it's more than you would normally eat, ask for a to-go box and put half away. You'll be less likely to overeat.

**Avoid the bread basket.** Bread is a hidden source of sodium. You can ask your server not to bring bread to your table so you won't be tempted by it.

**Ask if you can make substitutions.** For example, get a baked potato instead of French fries. Mixed veggies or a side salad might also be available.

**Avoid unlimited refills of drinks.** Ask your server not to fill your glass unless you ask, so you can keep track of how much you drink. You can also ask for a smaller cup.

**Be creative.** When ordering, sometimes it can be cheaper and just as filling to order an appetizer and side salad instead of an entrée.

**Don't be afraid to ask questions.** Even if you have done your research, be sure to ask your server how things are prepared. Let them know you have a medical condition and care must be taken with your food. Be kind and understanding and most restaurants will

do their best to help you.

## Additional Resources

Don't forget to check out additional resources that can help keep you on track to a healthy life!

CHF Websites:

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

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

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

Cooking Classes and Recipes:

Recipes can be found at

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

## Apps to Keep You On Track:

MyFitnessPal – set goals, record your recipes, and enter in foods from various restaurants and food chains. The pre-loaded food database helps you enter in common brands of foods. Available on iPhone and Android.

HF Path (from the American Heart Association) – manage medications, receive reminders, track symptoms, and connect with other patients dealing with heart failure.

Heart Failure Health Storyline – track medications, symptoms, daily vitals, and physical activity. Features a daily mood journal. Can be synced with other apps.

Fit NOLA – find healthy menu options from New Orleans restaurants. Access local health and wellness events.

## Doctor Appointments

Make sure you see your Primary Care doctor on a regular basis.

Follow up with your cardiologist and dietitian as well.