

# Congestive Heart Failure Program

## Supportive Material

### To Help You Stay Well



**CHF**

*Excellence  
in  
Cardiovascular  
Care*



*Group  
Health  
Centre*



SAULT AREA  
HOSPITAL  
HÔPITAL DE  
SAULT-SAINTE-MARIE



*Connecting you with care  
Votre lien aux soins*

**CCAC CASC**

Community  
Care Access  
Centre

Centre d'accès  
aux soins  
communautaires

## **The Sault Ste. Marie Collaborative Congestive Heart Failure (CHF) Program**

A program created to improve outcomes for patients with CHF by improving the continuity of care between hospital and home using a comprehensive, multidisciplinary approach to education, discharge and home follow-up.



The goal of the CHF program is to help you understand your condition so that you can learn to manage it and stay well. This is “self-management”. This booklet outlines the information needed to guide you in your CHF self-management.

**Your health care team will  
support you to stay well.**

### **Contact Information**

If you have not heard from a nurse and you are a  
Group Health Centre patient, please call 705-541-2305

All other patients please call:  
Sault Area Hospital Congestive Heart Failure Clinic 705-759-3691

OR

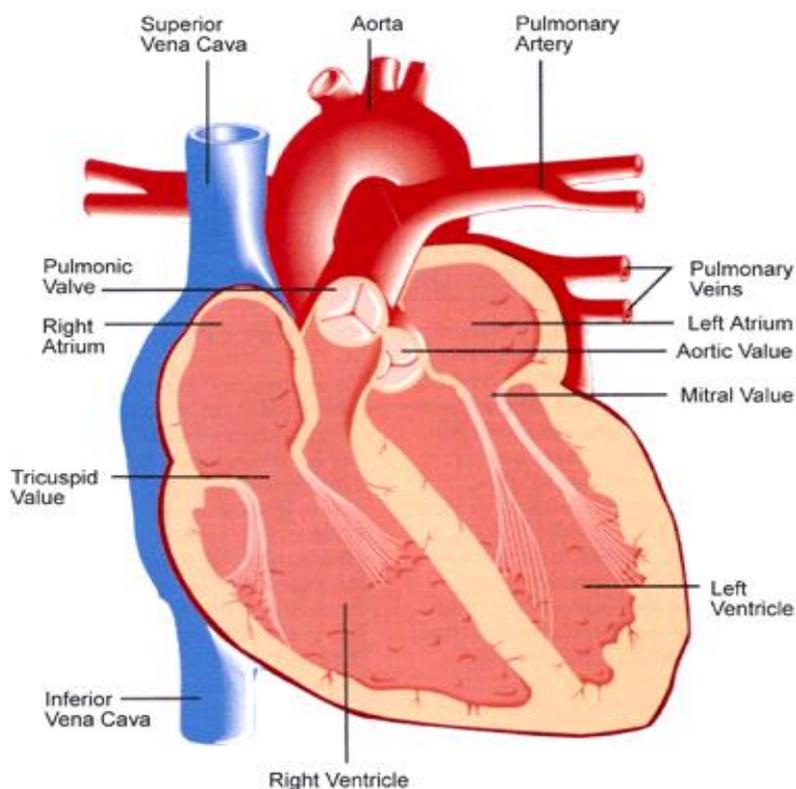
North East Community Care Access Centre 705-949-1650

## What is Congestive Heart Failure (CHF)?

CHF means your heart does not pump as well as it should. This results in parts of your body not getting enough blood and oxygen.

CHF is one of the most common reasons for hospital admission affecting approximately 350,000 Canadians of all ages.

### How Your Heart Works

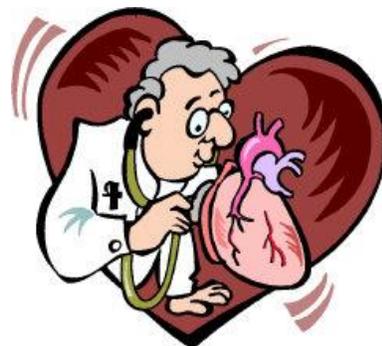


Your heart is roughly the size of your fist. It pumps blood to your lungs where oxygen is added to your bloodstream, and circulated to every part of your body. After the oxygen has gone from your bloodstream the blood goes back to your heart where the whole process begins again.

**So remember** - CHF means the heart is having trouble pumping blood. This result in a backup of fluid into the lungs and other parts of the body causing the symptoms you feel.

## Causes of CHF

- Coronary Artery Disease
- Heart Attack
- High Blood Pressure
- Valve Disease
- Cardiomyopathy
- Related Health Problems
  - Abnormal heart beat (Arrhythmia)
  - Diabetes
  - Chronic Kidney problems
  - Severe Anemia
  - Overactive Thyroid
  - Congenital Heart Defects (conditions you are born with).



Your Health Care Team can explain whether any of these conditions are related to your heart failure.

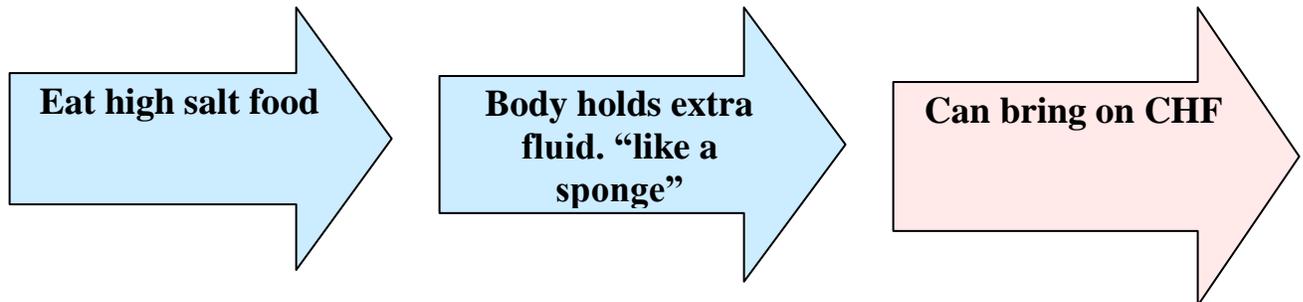
## Symptoms of CHF

- Learn to recognize signs of CHF so that you can act on them immediately!
- CHF can quickly worsen!
- Your knowledge and “self-management” along with the guidance of your health care team can prevent hospital admission or readmission
- Remove the **pamphlet** insert included in this booklet and keep it handy to review often the signs and symptoms of heart failure and how you can self-manage your care

**CHF cannot be cured  
but it can be managed.  
The goal of treatment is to keep  
your condition stable!**

## Salt

Salt is present in our diet in many foods we eat. Sodium is the part of salt that is a health concern. A diet high in salt/sodium will cause your body to retain (hold on to) extra fluid resulting in an increased workload on your heart.



It takes time to adjust to less salt in the diet! A balanced, low sodium diet can help control CHF and make you feel better!

### **Think about it:**

- **Water pills control fluid buildup in your body. This is why you go to the bathroom more after your water pill**
- **Sodium is like a sponge that holds extra fluid in your blood**

**So if you eat a low sodium diet your water pills can work better!**

# Label Reading

Read food labels to keep track of how much sodium is in a product.

Steps:

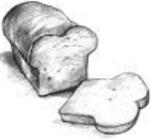
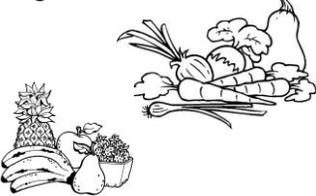
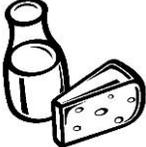
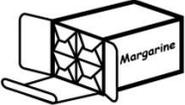
1. Be aware of the serving size (i.e. 8 crackers = 1 serving)
2. Look at the “Sodium” which refers to salt in that serving size.
3. Salt content under 10% per serving size is healthiest choice! (or 0 to 200 mg per serving size, or aim for 500mg sodium or less per meal.)

**Check canned goods, food boxes, liquids, and all packaged foods.**

## No Added Salt Guidelines

1. Prepare food without salt when cooking.
2. Do not add salt at the table.
3. Check your spices. Sea salt, celery salt, Onion salt, garlic salt and monosodium glutamate (MSG) all contain salt.
4. Avoid salty foods (see list).
5. Limit the use of commercially prepared food products. Try making your own soups, casseroles, sauces and salad dressings.
6. Use fresh or frozen vegetables instead of canned vegetables
7. Read labels. Salt may also be listed as “sodium” or “Na”.
8. Do not use salt substitutes without asking your doctor.
9. Do not use medications that contain sodium (i.e. laxatives, antacids, etc.). Your doctor should approve **ALL** medications.

Chicken Noodle Soup			
<b>Nutrition Facts</b>			
Serving Size 1/2 cup (120 ml) condensed soup			
Servings Per Container about 2.5			
Amount Per Serving			
<b>Calories</b>	60	Calories from Fat	15
<b>% Daily Value*</b>			
<b>Total Fat</b>	1.5g		<b>2%</b>
Saturated Fat	0.5g		<b>3%</b>
Trans Fat	0g		
<b>Cholesterol</b>	15mg		
<b>Sodium</b>	890mg		<b>37%</b>
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b>	8g		<b>3%</b>
Dietary Fiber	1g		<b>4%</b>
Sugars	1g		
<b>Protein</b>	3g		
<b>Vitamin A</b>	4%	<b>Calcium</b>	0%
<b>Vitamin C</b>	0%	<b>Iron</b>	2%
<small>*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your Daily Values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.</small>			
	Calories	2000	2500
Total Fat	Less than	65g	80g
Sat Fat	Less than	20g	25g
Cholesterol	Less than	300mg	300mg
Sodium	Less than	2,400m	2400mg
Total Carbohydrate		300g	375g
Dietary Fiber		25g	30g

Food Items	Use	Avoid
<p>Bread, rice, pasta and cereals</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• whole grain breads, cereals, pasta and rice</li> <li>• low fat snack foods such as air popped popcorn and low sodium pretzels</li> <li>• barley, quinoa, couscous, bulgar</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• instant cereals</li> <li>• commercial baked goods, such as cakes, pies, donuts and croissants</li> <li>• snack foods such as potato chips and Cheezies</li> </ul>
<p>Vegetables &amp; Fruits</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• all fresh and frozen vegetables &amp; fruit</li> <li>• drained low-sodium canned vegetables</li> <li>• canned fruit</li> <li>• low sodium or salt-free vegetable juice</li> <li>• all fruit juice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• coconut</li> <li>• battered or deep fried vegetables</li> <li>• undrained canned vegetables</li> <li>• commercial tomato sauce</li> <li>• sauerkraut, pickles, pickled vegetables</li> <li>• canned vegetables or tomato juice</li> </ul>
<p>Milk and Milk products</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• skim or 1% milk/yogurt/cottage cheese</li> <li>• lower fat cheese (less than 20% M.F.)</li> <li>• low fat ice-cream (1% M.F.), frozen yogurt (2% M.F.), sherbert</li> <li>• fortified soy beverages.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• full fat milk &amp; dairy products</li> <li>• processed cheese slices</li> <li>• processed cheese spread (Cheez Whiz) Malted milk, milkshakes, buttermilk</li> </ul>
<p>Meat, fish, poultry, eggs and alternatives (legumes)</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• fish, especially fatty fish such as salmon, mackerel and sardines.</li> <li>• lean cuts of meat with visible fat trimmed off such as strip loin or round.</li> <li>• skinless chicken or turkey.</li> <li>• dried peas, beans and lentils.</li> <li>• egg whites or substitutes.</li> <li>• soy based meat alternatives such as tofu and textured vegetable protein (TVP).</li> <li>• unsalted nuts and peanuts.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• deep fried chicken or battered fish.</li> <li>• meat with visible fat.</li> <li>• chicken or turkey with skin.</li> <li>• organ meats: liver, kidney.</li> <li>• regular luncheon meat, bacon, sausage or hot dogs.</li> <li>• smoked, cured, salted, kosher or canned meat, poultry or fish.</li> <li>• more than 2 egg yolks each week. Salted nuts and peanuts.</li> </ul>
<p>Fats &amp; Oils</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• soft, non-hydrogenated margarine.</li> <li>• olive, canola, soybean, peanut, corn, sunflower, safflower and flax seed oil.</li> <li>• salad dressings such as oil and vinegar or low fat, low sodium. Fat-free sour cream</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• regular sauces and gravies</li> <li>• cream cheese, creamy salad dressings and full fat mayo</li> <li>• butter, cream, lard and shortening</li> <li>• coconut or palm oil</li> </ul>
<p>Miscellaneous</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• no added salt seasonings such as Mrs. Dash®, Club House No Added Salt</li> <li>• fresh or dried herbs and spices</li> <li>• soups, homemade</li> <li>• soups, low sodium</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sea salt, onion salt, garlic salt</li> <li>• monosodium glutamate (MSG)</li> <li>• canned soups, broth, bouillons</li> <li>• packaged dried soups, broth, bouillons</li> </ul>

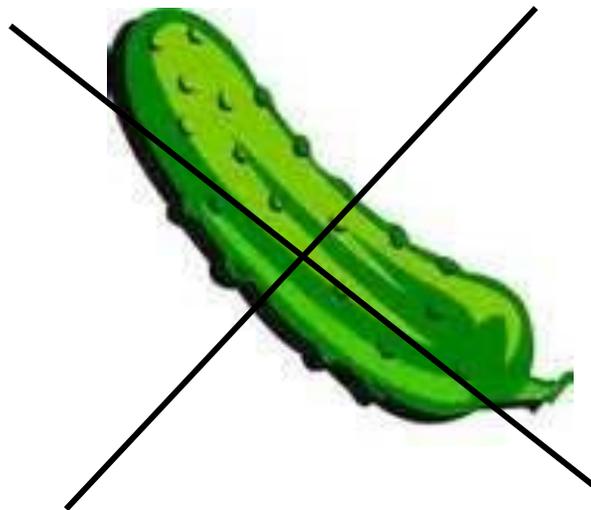
## Tips For Dining Out

- Ask for foods to be prepared without salt, MSG, Soya sauce
- Watch for key words such as pickled, cured, smoked, cheese sauce, gravy or broth. They are all high in salt.
- Avoid or limit use of condiments such as ketchup, mustard, pickles, relish and salad dressings
- Avoid or limit fast foods, buffets, most Chinese food



## Some suggestions

- Ask for gravy, sauces, salad dressings, condiments (mustard ketchup relish, mayo) on the side
- Have fruit or salad as a starter instead of soup
- Choose foods that are not breaded or processed
- Ask for Chinese dinners with no MSG, no Soya sauce
- Have hamburgers, breakfast sandwiches without processed cheese, ham, bacon. >>>**Remove the dill pickle**<<<
- Do not add salt to your food



# Fluids

Fluids are important for your health. If you have CHF and you drink too much fluid:

- Your heart will have to work much harder.
- Your hands, face, legs and/or feet can swell.
- You may have trouble breathing.
- Your water and heart pills will not work as well.

## An Important Rule:

**Drink no more than 6-8 cups (1.5-2 litres) of fluids each day. One cup measures 8 fluid ounces (250 ml). (NOT A MUG!!!)**

What counts as a fluid? All foods contain some fluid, however, only foods that are liquid at room temperature need to be counted. Remember to measure and count the following as fluids:

- Any beverage - water, milk, creamers, coffee and tea, pop, juice, alcohol
- Any liquid foods - soups, jello, ice-cream, (1/2 cup = 1/2 cup fluid), popsicles (1 double = 1/3 cup fluid), ice cubes or ice chips (let some melt in a measuring cup to determine fluid amount).

## Keep Track of Your Daily Fluid Intake!!!

1. Measure out 6-8 cups of water into a clear jug.
2. **Whenever you drink, pour out the same amount of water** from the jug. This will help you keep track of the amount of fluid you have left for the rest of the day.



### Tips and Tricks to decrease fluids

- ✓ Use a smaller glass or mug for your fluid & measure at first to be sure!
- ✓ “Sip and Swirl” your fluids around in your mouth before you swallow.
- ✓ Eat fruit instead of the juice
- ✓ Take your meds with your meals if possible
- ✓ Freeze your water bottle and drink it as it melts

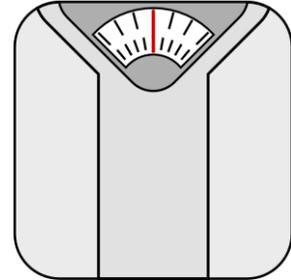
### Ideas to Relieve dry Mouth

- ✓ Suck on crushed ice. Ice stays in your mouth longer than water
- ✓ Add lemon juice to ice or water.
- ✓ Brush your teeth often
- ✓ Moisten your mouth with hard candies, mints, gum or lemon wedges.
- ✓ Rinse your mouth with cold water (without swallowing) or mouthwash.
- ✓ Avoid high sugar drinks like pop and fruit juice

## Daily Weight

**Sudden weight gain (2 pounds/1 kilogram overnight or 5 pounds in a week) is an early sign of worsening CHF.**

- ✓ Each morning after getting up, empty your bladder, and before dressing and eating **STEP ON THE SCALE**
- ✓ Keep a daily weight log
- ✓ Be aware of CHF signs and symptoms
- ✓ Follow your self-management plan  
(see *pamphlet insert*)
- ✓ If you have gained weight, ask yourself:  
“What have I eaten?” (salty food)  
“Did I go over my daily fluid restriction?”
- ✓ (6-8 cups per day)
- ✓ If unsure call your health care provider
- ✓ Medications can be adjusted to prevent a trip to the hospital



**My weight is the same every morning. Why do I need to keep checking my weights?**



You can gain weight without swelling. The average person can hold about 10 pounds of fluid before developing swelling. The best way to watch for fluid buildup in your body is to weigh yourself first thing every morning.

**REMEMBER...extra fluid in the body means the heart has to work harder!**

Overnight weight gain is **NOT** healthy weight gain.  
Healthy weight gain is more gradual.

### **Remember!!!!**

If you have gained 2 pounds overnight or 5 pounds in a week and have been advised by your physician or nurse to increase your water pill...  
**DO SO.** (see pamphlet insert)



# Medications that may help you with your CHF



- Note: all medications have side effects.
- Please consult your healthcare team/pharmacist if you have concerns

<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Ace Inhibitor or ARB</b> (drugs ending in “pril or “sartan”) _____	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lowers your blood pressure</li> <li>• Decreases strain on your heart</li> <li>• Allows the blood to pump easier</li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Beta Blocker</b> (e.g. drugs ending in “ol”) _____	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lowers blood pressure</li> <li>• Slows your heart rate.</li> <li>• Changes the hormones that can be damaging your heart</li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Diuretics</b> (water pill, e.g. Furosemide, metolazone, etc.) _____	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduces the extra fluid in your body               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Decreases your swelling</li> <li>- Improves your breathing</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Aldosterone Antagonist</b> (e.g. spironolactone, eplerenone) _____	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changes the hormones that can damage your heart or put a strain on your heart</li> <li>• Helps the body regulate salt and water balance in your body</li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Digoxin</b> _____	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Slows the heart rate</li> <li>• Helps the heart muscle pump stronger and more regular</li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Hydralazine and Nitrate</b> _____	Two pills that can be used in combination to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lower blood pressure</li> <li>• Decrease strain on your heart by relaxing blood vessels to the heart</li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Other</b> _____	

## Immunization

Ask your health care provider if your immunizations are “up to date”. Getting the flu or pneumonia can aggravate your CHF.

## Herbal Medicines

- Many claims are made that certain **herbs and supplements** can help with heart failure.
- None have been medically proven.
- Some can interfere with your prescribed medications. Some can even cause organ damage. “Natural” does not mean safe.
- Talk to your health care team before you try any of these products.



### Important Tips About Your Medication

1. Take your medicine as prescribed by your physician
2. Do not just “stop them” or make your “own adjustments”.
3. Get reorders of your medications before you run out of them. In fact, order more meds when you still have a 2-week supply left!
4. Discuss questions and concerns with your doctor, pharmacist or nurse.
5. Keep a current list of your medications in your wallet and bring it along with the pills to your doctors’ appointments.
6. Use a dosette (pill box) and pour medications out for the week. The pharmacies can make blister packs to have your pills poured for the week. Either method will improve consistency and accuracy in taking medications
7. Carry your meds with you if you travel. Do not pack in a suitcase
8. If you have trouble with the cost of your meds you may qualify to apply to the Ontario Trillium Program for assistance. Call 1-800-575-5386 or discuss with the pharmacist.

# Help Your Heart

## Stay Active

Exercise allows the body to become more efficient in its use of oxygen. Staying active may help you to feel less tired and have fewer symptoms.

Talk to your health care provider about what safe choices are best for you. Ask about walking outdoors or indoors (at a local mall), light gardening, swimming or other options that are right for you.



1. Stop and rest if you feel short of breath or tired.
  2. Pace yourself. If you can't have a conversation during an activity—you may be pushing yourself too hard. (Walk test).
  3. Avoid exercise that has you lifting heavy weight above your heart (5 pounds).
  4. You will have good days and bad days. Know your limits.
  5. Stay as active as feels comfortable to you.
- Continue day-to-day activities as long as you don't feel too tired or short of breath.

## What is available for you?

**A Cardiac Rehab program** is a supervised exercise program designed for your specific personal needs. It may help you feel more confident in knowing how to improve your heart health.



**Discuss exercise and Cardiac Rehab with your health care provider.**

## Tips to Help With Shortness of Breath and to Conserve Energy

**P**

**Prioritize** activities or tasks. Delegate what others can help you with

**Plan** your time. Don't try and do everything in one day

**Pace** yourself. Break down a hard job

**Position** yourself. Sitting to do a task takes less energy

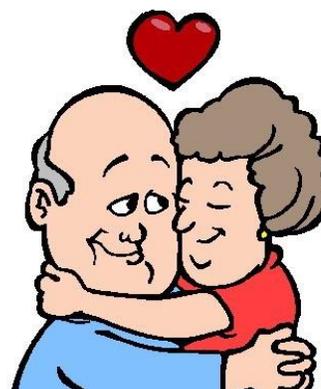
**Remember: If you feel tired the day after activity, ask yourself "Did I do too much yesterday?"**

## Sexual Activity

Sometimes medications may make you feel less interested in sex. The stress of learning how to cope with your heart failure also makes you feel less interested. Sharing your concerns with your partner can help you both feel better. If you are having sexual difficulties do not hesitate to talk to your health care provider. Try other types of intimacy to feel close to your partner. There's more to sex than intercourse.

### Tips

- Pick a time when you feel rested and not feeling pressured
- Avoid sex after eating a big meal or drinking alcohol
- Have the room temperature not too hot or too cold
- Avoid strenuous positions



## Smoking



**STOP!** Smoking cigarettes and chewing tobacco (nicotine) narrows your blood vessels increasing the heart's workload. Talk to your health care provider for help. Contact **1-877- 513-5333** for support or online at <http://www.smokershelpline.ca>.

## Being Overweight

Being overweight makes your heart have to work harder. An exercise program can help to get you more active. A dietitian can help you with making “heart healthy” diet changes.

## Alcohol

Discuss alcohol with your physician. Alcohol can:

- Affect your heart function
- Change how your medications work
- Affect your other medical conditions
- Reduce the strength of the heart beat
- Cause or worsen irregular heart rhythm



**Remember: It is also a fluid!**

## Stress

Daily living can cause stress. Living with CHF can make things worse.

- ✓ Identify what causes you to feel stressed, worried, restless or tense.
- ✓ Think about healthy ways to deal with stress...develop a plan of approach.
- ✓ Reducing stress improves your health.
- ✓ Physical activity can help you deal with stress.
- ✓ Alcohol can worsen stress!
- ✓ Ask your health care provider for help.

## Depression

It is important to recognize and treat depression. Depression can negatively affect your health. Dealing with CHF can get you feeling down. Learning to understand and cope with your CHF can help you feel better and realize you can still have quality to your life. Your health care teams are here to help and support you.



## Rest and Relaxation

- Rest is as important as exercise
- Find ways in each day to relax (reading, daily walk, visit with friends)

**If stress or depression is interfering with your day-to-day life or relationships, please seek help. Your healthcare team is here for you.**

## Resource Information



There is lots of online information available for you.  
Try visiting the following websites:

1. Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada: [www.heartandstroke.ca](http://www.heartandstroke.ca)
2. American Heart Association: [www.heart.org](http://www.heart.org)
4. Mayo Clinic: [www.mayoclinic.com](http://www.mayoclinic.com)
5. Canadian Stroke Network: [www.sodium101.ca](http://www.sodium101.ca)
6. Canadian Heart Failure Network: [www.chfn.ca](http://www.chfn.ca)

### REMEMBER TO:

**Congratulate yourself on trying to stay well.  
Enjoy life.  
Live it to the fullest.  
Take time to laugh.  
Some of your best days may still be ahead!**



*The CHF Program staff and contributors would like to recognize and honor Dr. Hui Lee for his vision and dedication to excellence in patient care. Dr. Lee helped to create this CHF Program and it has proven to decrease hospital admissions and save lives.*

*In 2004 the CHF Program in Sault Ste. Marie won the National Best Practice award.*