



# What Your Heart Tells You...

## A Short Guide to Heart Failure

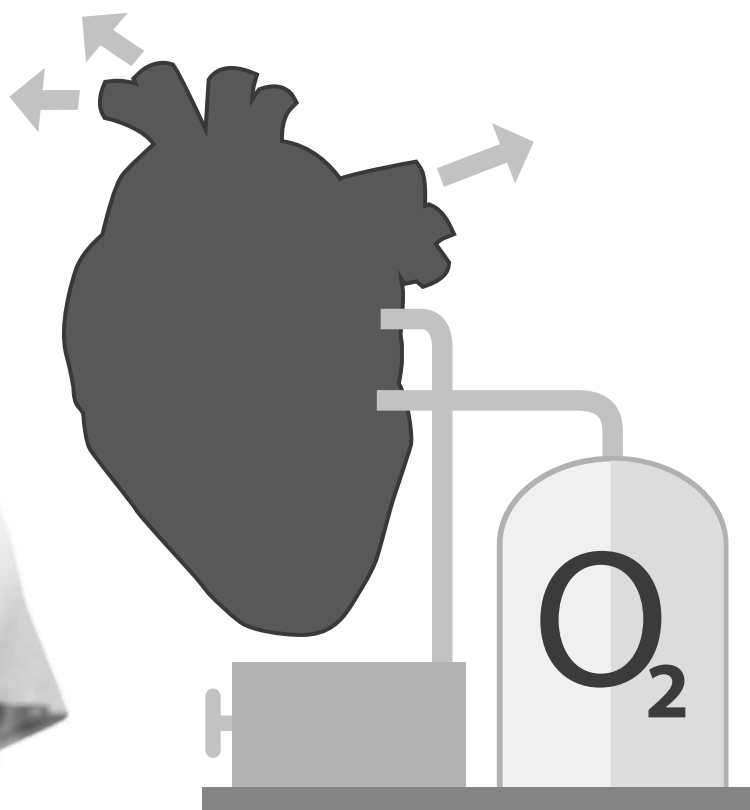
*“Only do what your heart tells you.” – Princess Diana*

**H**ear failure can slowly sneak up on you or it can happen quickly. In either case, your heart will tell you something is wrong, by speaking through symptoms such as tiredness, weakness or dizziness. Your heart may be sending you a

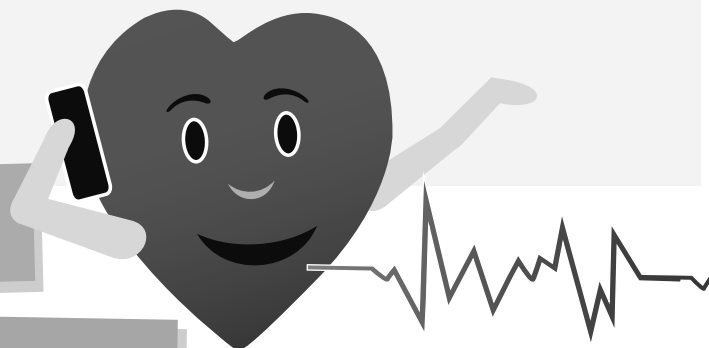
message if you must use extra pillows to help you breathe at night or you wake up gasping for breath. Swollen legs and feet or a dry cough are other signals from your heart that you need to seek help.

## What’s Going On?

**T**he heart is a pump, sending oxygen-rich blood out to the rest of the body. When the pump isn’t working well, blood can congest your lungs, making breathing difficult, or blood may back up in your veins, causing your feet and legs to swell. Do you have coronary artery disease, an enlarged heart, heart valve problems, high blood pressure or lung disease? Any of these can make you more likely to develop heart failure.



# What Can I Do?



*Listen To Your Heart...*

*Pay Attention To Your Symptoms...*

*Get diagnosed early to help avoid an episode of heart failure.*

**Even though heart failure is a chronic condition,  
you can do a lot to avoid episodes.**

**T**alk to your Primary Care Physician (PCP) about your symptoms and have the necessary testing done to make sure of the diagnosis.

Find out whether you need to see a Cardiologist about underlying problems.

Ask your PCP when to report symptoms, such as if you gain 2-3 pounds or more in a day or 5 pounds or more in a week.

Buy a scale, weigh yourself daily and keep a calendar handy for writing down your weight and any symptoms. Take the calendar to doctor appointments.

Be as active as possible within the limits that you and your doctor have worked out.

Aim to eat a low-sodium diet (read food labels for the amount of sodium per serving; try to limit yourself to 2000 mg/day or less).

Take all medications as prescribed, even if you feel well. Use a pill-minder, which you can get at the pharmacy.

Stop smoking – it makes your heart work harder. Ask your doctor about programs and medications to help you quit.

Keep all medical appointments and have testing done as your doctor orders.

***Call 911 if you are having difficulty breathing when sitting up or you're having chest pain.***

## Be Smart!

Study up on heart failure, its causes and symptoms, so you can avoid flareups. Listen to your heart to stay heart-healthy all your life!

