

Chronic heart failure in adults: diagnosis and management

Information for the public

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Chronic heart failure: the care you should expect

Heart failure means the heart is not pumping blood around the body as well as it needs to (it does not mean the heart has stopped working). It affects older people more commonly but can happen at any age. Although heart failure may get worse over time, most people can still have a good quality of life, especially if the condition is treated early. Just under a million people in the UK are living with heart failure.

We want this guideline to make a difference to people with heart failure by making sure:

- if you have symptoms that might be heart failure your GP offers you some checks and a blood test to see how well your heart is working
- you are referred to a specialist heart failure team if your blood test shows you might have heart failure
- your care team explains heart failure in an open and sensitive way, helping you understand the condition and its treatment and giving you more information whenever you need it
- you are offered the right medicines to control your symptoms, improve your quality of life and help you live longer
- your care team agrees a care plan with you for how to manage your heart failure, and gives a copy to you and everyone involved in your care
- you are offered a personalised programme of exercise, information and support designed for your physical, emotional and psychological needs, called cardiac rehabilitation.

Making decisions together

Decisions about treatment and care are best when they are made together. Your healthcare professionals should give you clear information, talk with you about your options and listen carefully to your views and concerns.

To help you make decisions, think about:

- What matters most to you – what do you want to get out of your treatment and care?
- What are you most worried about – are there risks or downsides to your treatment that worry you more than others?
- How will the condition and its treatment affect your day to day life?
- What happens if you don't want to have treatment?

If you can't understand the information you are given, tell your healthcare professional.

Read more about [making decisions about your care](#).

Where can I find out more?

[NHS Choices](#) has more information about heart failure.

The organisations below can give you more advice and support.

- [British Heart Foundation](#), 0300 330 3311
- [Cardiomyopathy UK](#), 0800 018 1024
- [Pumping Marvellous Foundation](#), 01772 796542

NICE is not responsible for the content of these websites.

To share an experience of care you have received, contact your local [Healthwatch](#).

We wrote this guideline with people who have been affected by heart failure and staff who treat and support them. All the decisions are based on the best research available.

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