



LIVING WELL



with

Heart Failure

Heart Failure Self Care Pack



Name

(please state the name you
prefer to be known as)

Date of Birth

NHS Number

Emergency Contact/
Carer's Details

Index



	Page Number
What is Self Care?	3
What is Heart Failure?	4
What causes Heart Failure?	5
Living with Heart Failure	6
Keeping Well	7
Staying Active	8
Ways To Get More Active	9
Ways Looking After Your Health	10
Taking Care of Yourself	
o Tips	11
Noticing Changes In Your Health	12
Relationships	13
o Family Support	14
Planning For The Future	
o Work	15
o Travel	16
o Benefit checks	17
Where To Find Support	
o Services	18
Useful Contacts	19 - 20

We have tried to include as much information as possible in the pack.

As everyone's situation is different, you may find that there is information in this pack that doesn't apply to you.

You may also use it to make notes, store appointments, and add letters, leaflets and anything else you may find useful.

What is Self Care?

...and what does it mean for me?



Looking after yourself in a healthy way, whether it's brushing your teeth, taking medicine when you have a cold, or doing some exercise, is really important to help to keep yourself as well as possible.

If you have a long-term condition, there are extra things you may need to consider, such as making changes to your diet, different types of exercise or different types of medication you may need to take.

By staying active, by doing things that are important to you, such as gardening, seeing friends and family, going on holiday, or continuing to work, if possible. It involves looking at what you can do and want to do, rather than what you can't do.

Living a healthy lifestyle is an important part of self care for everyone. You can take responsibility for your own health and wellbeing, with support from the people involved in your care.

When you talk to your doctor or nurse about your condition, you may want to discuss some of the things you need to do to stay well. Some of these will be things that you do yourself, such as eating healthily, exercising, or taking your medicines at the right time.

NHS Choices

There's lots of useful information about keeping well and healthy living. Look out for the Live Well section of the NHS Choices website. If you're living with a long-term condition, Your health, your way has advice on self care and taking control of your health.



www.nhs.uk

What is Heart Failure?

Heart failure is a serious condition caused by the heart failing to pump enough blood around the body at the right pressure.

It usually occurs because the heart muscle has become too weak or stiff to work properly.

If you have heart failure it does not mean that your heart is about to stop working. It means that your heart needs some support to do its job, usually in the form of medicines.

Breathlessness, feeling very tired and ankle swelling are the main symptoms of heart failure. However, all of these symptoms can have other causes, only some of which are serious.

The symptoms of heart failure usually develop quickly (acute heart failure), but they can also develop gradually (chronic heart failure).

There are different types of Heart Failure. This pack is meant to be a general Self Care Pack, designed to help you **Live well with Heart Failure**. The information is general as people will be affected differently and have different capabilities.

If you are worried about how the information in the pack applies to you please check things out with your doctor, nurse, or member of your healthcare team. They will be happy to answer your questions. It may help to jot down any of your queries, make some notes and bring these along to your regular appointment. Remember, if you are unsure about anything it is better to ask. Everyone involved in your care wants you to stay as well as possible.

You can get some very helpful information and resources from the **British Heart Foundation**. Check out their web page for more information about heart failure:



www.bhf.org.uk/heart-health/conditions/heart-failure

What causes Heart Failure?

Heart failure does not often have a single cause. A number of problems usually 'gang up' on the heart, causing it to fail.

There are a number of health conditions that increase your chances of developing heart failure, including:



- High blood pressure (hypertension) – can put extra strain on the heart which, over time, can lead to heart failure
- Coronary heart disease (CHD) – where the arteries that supply blood to the heart become clogged up by the fatty substances (atherosclerosis); this may cause angina or a heart attack
- Heart muscle weakens (cardiomyopathy) – can cause heart failure; the reasons for this are often unclear but it may be genetic in origin, due to an infection (usually viral), alcohol misuse, or medication that is used to treat cancer
- Heart rhythm disturbance (atrial fibrillation)
- Heart valve disease, damage or problems with the heart's valves

Remember – if at any time you feel that your heart failure symptoms have deteriorated and you feel unwell and require medical attention then call your doctor, 111 or if you feel it's an **emergency** then call **999**.

Living with Heart Failure

Being diagnosed with heart failure may come as a shock. However the good news is that there is lots you can do to improve your quality of life.

Looking after yourself and taking responsibility for your own health will help to keep you as well as possible.

It is important that you take any prescribed medication, even after you feel better. The medicines can prevent or delay your heart problem and symptoms from getting worse. Some medicines are designed to protect or heal your heart. If you do not take them, they cannot help you and the underlying problem will get worse.

What to do if you're worried

Speak to your healthcare team if you have any questions or concerns about the medication you are taking or any side effects.

As heart failure is a long-term condition, you will have regular contact with your healthcare team. Developing a good relationship with the members of your team will enable you to discuss your symptoms and any concerns that you have. The more the team knows about you, the more they can help you.

British Heart Foundation have a helpline with cardiac nurses and heart health advisors on hand to help with any questions or concerns you have about heart health and heart conditions.



0300 330 3311

Lines are open 9am - 5pm, Monday to Friday



www.bhf.org.uk/heart-health/how-we-can-help/information/heart-helpline

Remember – if at any time you feel that your heart failure symptoms have deteriorated and you feel unwell and require medical attention then call your doctor, 111 or if you feel it's an **emergency** then call **999**.

Keeping Well

Top 10 healthy heart tips

A healthy lifestyle will make your heart healthier. Here are 10 things you can do to improve yours:

- 1 **Get active** – there are tips and advice in the section on Staying Active
- 2 **Do you need help to stop smoking?** Smoking is one of the main causes of coronary heart disease. A year after giving up your risk of a heart attack falls to about half that of a smoker
- 3 **Manage your weight** – being overweight can increase your risk of heart disease. Stick to a well balanced diet, low in fat and high in fruit and vegetables, combined with plenty of physical activity
- 4 **Reduce your salt intake.** To maintain a healthy blood pressure, try and reduce your salt intake. Try adding less to your cooking, or cut it out completely. You'll soon get used to it. Also watch out for high salt levels in processed foods
- 5 **Get your 5 a day** – eat five portions of fruit and vegetables a day. Add dried fruit to breakfast cereal and add vegetables to your pasta sauces and curries
- 6 **Eat oily fish** – twice a week. Fish such as mackerel, sardines, fresh tuna and salmon are an excellent source of omega-3 fats, which can help protect against heart disease
- 7 **Walk off stress** – if you're feeling under pressure clear your mind with a walk. It will help put your ideas in order and reduce tension
- 8 **Cut saturated fat.** Small changes to your diet can have positive health benefits – choose semi-skimmed over full fat milk, leaner cuts of meat, and steam or grill foods rather than frying
- 9 **Know your alcohol limits**
- 10 **Read the food label** – when shopping look at the label on food packets to see what the product contains. Understanding what is in food will help you make healthier choices

Staying Active

It is very important to seek advice from your doctor or healthcare team about the sort of exercise you are planning to take, so you can exercise safely. People can have different types of Heart Failure and people suffering with particular types of heart failure might be advised to avoid swimming, for example, as the temperature change might not be good for their condition. Everyone's tolerance is different.

Staying active is great for keeping your heart healthy and - along with eating a healthy diet - can help you stay as healthy as possible and manage your weight.

If you're new to exercise, find out what you can do to start getting active. If you're already doing regular physical activity, take a look at ways you can increase and be active every day. You'll soon feel the benefits when you become more active. You'll feel fitter, have more energy, be more relaxed and have more confidence.

Top tip: Keep a record

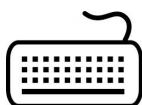
A weekly activity diary helps you see how you're doing on a regular basis. You can also look back at how far you've come over time and chart your progress.

The first question to ask yourself is what do you want to achieve? Setting yourself short, medium and long-term goals will give you something to aim for.

Champions Show The Way supports people's Health and Wellbeing by providing social activities and walking groups which are run by Volunteer Community Health Champions. These free activities are aimed at anyone who has a long term health condition/has recently been discharged from hospital or is over 50



01274 321911



champions@bdct.nhs.uk

Ways To Get More Active

- **Start small and build up** – check with your doctor or healthcare team
- **Be realistic about your goals** - set yourself realistic goals that are specific, measurable and achievable
- **Make exercise part of your day.** Plan a time to do some physical activity that fits in with the rest of your day and try keeping an activity diary to help monitor your progress and success. If you miss a day, don't worry - just make sure you start again the next day
- **Keep moving and make it fun!** Remember, everyday activities count, so look out for opportunities to be active during the day. For example, use the stairs instead of the lift, or walk to the local shop rather than taking the car. Choose activities that you enjoy, to help you achieve your goals and keep you motivated. Vary your activity and try involving family and friends
- **Reward yourself** - recognise when you achieve your goals. Think of things that you could reward yourself with, like a copy of your favourite magazine
- When doing regular physical activity becomes a habit, and you're looking for new challenges, increase little by little.
- Champions Show The Way offer walks throughout the Bradford area.



Champions Show The Way 01274 321911



www.walkingforhealth.org.uk

Looking After Your Health

It is important for you (and your carer, if you have one) to look after your health and wellbeing.

You might want to:

- Have a flu jab
- Have regular health checks
- Ensure you are receiving any benefits you are entitled to



Carers' Resource

01274 449660 / 01756 700888



Carers' Connection

01274 323323

Health Trainer Service

Bradford District 
Care Trust

If you would like free and confidential one to one support to:

- Eat healthier
- Get fit
- Manage your weight
- Feel happier
- Reduce stress
- Access new groups
- Make any lifestyle or behaviour changes to improve your health and wellbeing

You can refer yourself to a local NHS trained **Health Trainer**, or ask your doctor to make a referral.



Health Trainer Service 01274 777527



healthtrainers@bdct.nhs.uk

Taking Care of Yourself

Tips on taking care of yourself:

- Keep any inserts from repeat prescriptions with this pack so that you remember which medication is important to take
- Regularly check with your pharmacist or doctor to ensure you are taking the right medication
- Take your medication regularly as it is prescribed. If you have any concerns with any effects the tablets you have may be taking on you it is important to discuss this with your health team (such as your doctor or pharmacist) before stopping any medication
- It is important to have a health check each year. Remind your doctor if it has been longer than a year or you feel your health has changed
- The free annual flu jab can reduce the risk of getting seriously ill in winter months and is available to over 65 year-olds and those with serious medical conditions. Ask your doctor for details
- You should also contact your doctor if you haven't had the pneumococcal vaccine, routinely offered to over 65s, and the shingles vaccine, currently given to those aged 70 and 79 year olds
- If you have had a fall or are at risk of falling in the future, you can be assessed for support in your own home. Contact your doctor or District Nurse to get a Falls Assessment. These are carried out by individual practices or District Nursing teams
- Your heart failure symptoms can be at risk of becoming worse even when you take your tablets regularly (if you get an infection, for example). Regular monitoring of your symptoms when you have heart failure will ensure you know when to contact your health team for an earlier review. See 'Noticing Changes in your Health'



Noticing Changes In Your Health

Your Heart Failure condition can put you at risk of having symptoms such as breathlessness and lower leg swelling. This can be caused by a build up of fluid in your system. Here are some self care tips your health care team may recommend:

- **Check your weight every day**
Check your weight at the same time every morning (after first trip to the toilet, before breakfast). Watch for any sudden increase in weight of 2-4lb (or 1-2kg) over 3-4 days as this will most likely be a sign of fluid collecting rather than what you eat
- **Watch for changes to leg swelling**
Keep watch for any swelling to your legs when you don't normally have any, Or, if you normally have some swelling, such as to feet or ankle swelling and you notice this is spreading higher up your legs
- **Pay attention to changes to your breathing**
Such as if you start feeling more breathless than usual on your usual daily activities. Also monitor any breathlessness overnight when lying down on your usual pillows, or if you start waking up suddenly with any breathing difficulties from sleep
- **Be aware of changes in your general health**
If you feel generally unwell, such as loss of appetite and reduced energy levels or develop any infections it is important to contact your doctor for a check up sooner rather than later.
If you notice any changes to your usual level of symptoms or general health and you have heart failure, then please contact your doctor or healthcare team for a review within 3-4 days of this occurring.

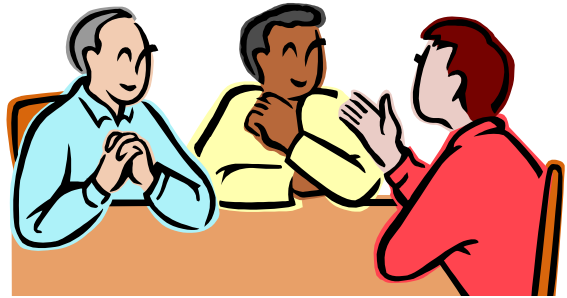
If your symptoms are left unchecked your condition and symptoms may be more difficult to treat and get under control.

If at any time you feel that your symptoms have deteriorated and you feel unwell then call your doctor, 111 or if you feel it's an emergency then call **999**.

Relationships

Being diagnosed with heart failure can be a shock. Some people feel scared, anxious, depressed or angry. They may feel unable to enjoy the things they used to, or to cope with everyday life.

It is estimated that around one in five people with heart failure have depression.



You should seek help if you think that you are depressed. Not only does depression reduce your ability to enjoy life, but it can make your heart failure symptoms worse.

Understandably, heart failure can make you worry about your health and how it affects your family. Many people also find that their physical relationship with their partner changes after they have been diagnosed, due to worries about having a heart attack, or losing interest in sex, or being unable to get an erection (which can sometimes be caused by your medication).

Talking things over

You will need to discuss plans for the future with those who are closest to you and with certain professionals.

If your family and friends do not already know about your diagnosis, try to tell them as soon as possible. Try to discuss matters in a calm way. It may help if you can talk about your feelings to someone you trust outside the family. Many people do not want to burden those closest to them with their worries.

Your doctor or nurse will be able to advise you and arrange support. You may also find it helpful to join a heart support group where you can talk to other people with heart conditions whose circumstances are similar to yours.

You can call the British Heart Foundation's heart helpline to find out about support groups in your area.



BHF Heart Helpline

0300 330 3311



www.bhf.org.uk

Family Support

Being diagnosed with any health condition may affect the whole family.

Family and friends may be worried, or having to take a caring role. It is important to get support before things become stressful so talk to your healthcare team about any worries you may have.



You might want to talk to someone from Relate. They offer advice, consultations, sex therapy, relationship counselling, workshops and support face-to-face and by phone. Counsellors are experienced relationship experts and are specially trained to work with families to help people resolve their problems.



Relate Bradford

01274 726096



Relate Keighley & Craven 01535 605047

Support for Carers

If you have a carer and they need help or advice, please contact:



Carers' Resource

01274 449660 / 01756 700888



Carers' Connection

01274 323323

Planning For The Future

Work

If you are well enough it is important to keep working for as long as you feel able. With the right support, staying in work can make you feel better and give you financial security

- Talk to your employer as soon as you feel that your heart failure is affecting your ability to do your job so that you can find a solution that suits both of you. For example, it may be possible for you to work part-time
- The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) requires employers to make reasonable adjustments to working practices or premises to help a person with a disability. This might, where possible, include changing or modifying tasks, altering work patterns, installing special equipment, allowing time off to attend appointments or helping with travel to work



Disability Advice Bradford

01274 609895



www.bradforddisabilityservices.co.uk



Citizens Advice Bureau

0844 245 1282



www.citizensadvice.org.uk



Department of Work & Pensions 0845 60 60 265

- Before leaving work, check whether there are benefits that you or your family may be entitled to. If necessary, your personnel department or manager should be able to help you make enquiries

Travel



Being diagnosed with heart failure should not prevent you from travelling or going on holiday, as long as you feel well enough and your condition is well controlled.

If you have heart failure, check with your doctor before you travel. It may help to jot down a few notes and go through any of the following at your next doctor or healthcare appointment.

- Do you need a doctor's letter to say you are fit to travel?
- Do you need to inform the airline, who may provide a wheelchair or electric car so that you can avoid having to walk long distances in the airport
- Do you need to wear flight socks? If you are thinking of buying a pair check with your doctor they are appropriate for you. Anyone travelling and sitting still for a long time, either in a car, coach or on a plane, should do simple exercises to reduce the risk of deep vein thrombosis (DVT). Also be aware that your legs and ankles may swell when flying and breathing may become more difficult if you have severe heart failure
- Do you need to take extra medication with you It may be advisable to take two sets of medication with you when you travel. Carry them in different places in case you lose one, and make a list of the medication you take and what it is for
- Having heart failure should not stop you from getting travel insurance, but you may have to find a specialist company that will insure you. The British Heart Foundation can supply you with a list.



BHF Heart Helpline

0300 330 3311



www.bhf.org.uk

- Do you know who to contact in case you feel unwell? Keep a note of this somewhere safe such as with your list of medications that a local doctor can refer to if you are taken ill

Benefit Checks

Many people don't claim the benefits they are entitled to.

Some people who have been given a diagnosis of dementia and/or those who care for them, may be entitled to certain benefits or concessions such as:



- o Personal Independence Payment (PIP)
- o Attendance Allowance
- o Council Tax Disregard
- o Blue Badge (parking permit)
- o Carers Allowance
- o Concessionary travel permits
- o Cinema Pass
- o Radar key (access to disabled toilets)

Help for Carers

Carers may also be entitled to some benefits, depending on their involvement with the person with heart failure. You should find out whether you are getting all the benefits you're entitled to. You are entitled to a benefits check to ensure you are receiving the right amount.

The organizations listed below can help you with this:



Disability Advice Bradford

01274 609895



**Bradford & Airedale
Citizens Advice Bureau**

0844 245 1282



Department of Work & Pensions

0845 60 60 265



British Heart Foundation

0300 330 3311

Where To Find Support

Services

Look at what services may be available to you. Even if you don't need them now, they may be useful in the future.

By using the services that you are entitled to you can ensure that those closest to you don't have to take on all the responsibility for helping you.

- Find out what services can be arranged through your doctor or consultant.
- Find out what kinds of services and support are provided by local voluntary organisations. Your local Citizens Advice Bureau, or Social Services can advise about this.
- Contact your local social services department for details of services that they can arrange. Find out about getting a community care assessment to assess your needs. Social Services departments are listed in the phone book under the name of the local authority.
- Connect to Support Bradford is website to help people seeking social care or support in the Bradford District, with everything you need to help you with your support, from local to national products and services, information, advice and more



www.connecttosupport.org/bradford

**Connect
to Support**
Bradford District

Welcome to Connect to Support Bradford District

Connect to Support is a new website for people needing care or support in Bradford District. You can find everything you need to help you with your support here, from local to national products and services, plus information and advice and much more.

Providers, sign up now
Register today

View
the Introductory Video

Tell us what you think
about the site



Search and Shop



Local groups and activities
Find local groups or activities in your area



Information and advice

Useful Contacts

Name	Contact Number	Details
Emergency Services	999	To call in case of fire, medical emergency or if you urgently need the Police.
111	111	NHS 111 is a fast and easy way to get the right help, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.
British Heart Foundation	0300 330 3311 www.bhf.org.uk	The UK's leading heart charity.
Health Trainers	01274 777527	Health Trainers can support you to make lifestyle changes and improve your health.
First Contact	www.carersresource.org/first-contact/	First Contact connects you to support for your health and wellbeing needs.
Carers' Resource	01274 449660 01756 700888 www.carersresource.org	The Carers' Resource provides support for carers, no matter what their age, race, religion or needs.
Carers' Connection	01274 323323	Carers' Connection offer an advice and support service to carers on any matter of interest to them, such as: Health and social care, Residential care, Holidays, Equipment, Leisure and wellbeing.

Useful Contacts

Name	Contact Number	Details
Connect to Support Bradford District	www.connecttosupport.org/bradford	A website to help people seeking social care or support in the Bradford District. Everything you need to help you with your support, from local to national products and services, information, advice and more.
Champions Show The Way	01274 321911 champions@bdct.nhs.uk	CSTW supports people's Health and Wellbeing by providing social activities and walking groups which are run by Volunteer Community Health Champions. These free activities are aimed at anyone who has a long term health condition/has recently been discharged from hospital or is over 50



Airedale, Wharfedale and Craven
Bradford Districts
Bradford City

CCGs working together



City of Bradford MDC

www.bradford.gov.uk

Produced by:



Health Action Local Engagement
Healthy Living Project



Based on the RNIB Living Well with Diabetes Folder developed by Elaine Appelbee in collaboration with local communities and health service providers.

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The wording in this publication can be made available in large print or Braille. Please call 01274 437963.

Self Care is committed to working in collaboration across Bradford CBMDC, Bradford City CCG, Bradford Districts CCG and Airedale, Wharfedale and Craven