



HEART FAILURE

Bromley

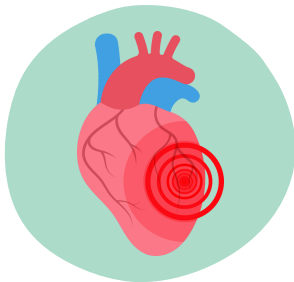
Well

HEALTH FACT SHEET

Updated December 2025

What is Heart Failure?

Heart failure is a condition in which the heart does not pump efficiently enough to meet all the needs of the body. This usually occurs because the heart has become weak or your heart muscle is damaged.



What are the symptoms?

- Shortness of breath after activity or at rest.
- Rapid or irregular heart beat.
- Swelling of feet, ankles and abdomen, due to fluid retention.
- Feeling tired most of the time and finding exercise exhausting.
- A persistent cough, a fast heart rate, and dizziness in some people.

What are the causes?

The most common cause of heart failure in the UK is coronary heart disease. Heart failure is also common in patients with high blood pressure and in those who have had a heart attack in the past.

Heart failure can also be caused by:

- Alcohol or drug abuse
- Congenital heart conditions
- A viral infection affecting the heart muscle
- An uncontrolled irregular heart rhythm (arrhythmia)

SELF CARE TIPS

EAT A LOW SALT DIET

Sodium is an electrolyte in your body. If we have too much sodium the body can retain too much water which puts even more pressure on the heart.

MONITOR AND CONTROL FLUID INTAKE

Ideally those with heart failure should aim to drink between 1-1.5 litres of fluid to reduce the risk of fluid overload.

To register with Bromley Well:
Freephone 0808 278 7898
Or register online:
www.bromleywell.org.uk/refer

Contact Lifestyle Support direct
07985 431484 / 07985 444210
or email
enquiry@bromleywell.org.uk



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What about treatment?

Treatment aims to control symptoms and slow the progression of the condition

Common treatments include:

- Making lifestyle changes such as eating a healthy diet, regular physical activity and stopping smoking
- Medication – a range of medication can help
- Devices implanted in your chest can help control your heart rhythm
- Surgery – bypass operation or a heart transplant

Some myths about heart failure:

Myth 1: Heart failure is untreatable

Not true, although heart failure is not curable, there are many ways to treat and manage heart failure to reduce symptoms. These can include lifestyle changes, medications, devices, and surgery. Speak to your GP or local cardiology service to find out more about the right combination of heart failure treatments for you.

Myth 2: Heart failure means your heart has stopped working

This is false. Heart failure means that the heart muscle is weakened and cannot pump enough blood around the body, but this does not mean that the heart has stopped working completely. Heart failure usually happens because the heart has become too weak or stiff. This means the heart needs some support to help it work better.

SELF CARE TIPS

GET VACCINATED

Keep up to date with vaccinations like your yearly flu vaccination.

ADHERE TO YOUR MEDICATION

By taking your medication, you can better control your symptoms and reduce the risk of things like fluid overload.

CHECK WEIGHT REGULARLY

Checking your weight regularly means you can notice signs of fluid retention early before symptoms begin.

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More myths about heart failure:

Myth 3: Heart failure is purely genetic

This is inaccurate. While heart failure is influenced by your genetics, lifestyle factors can also increase your risk. To reduce your risk of heart failure, focus on decreasing your risk of developing heart disease or high blood pressure. You can do this by eating a healthy diet, managing stress, and stopping smoking, among other healthy lifestyle changes.

Myth 4: You should never exercise with heart failure

That's not true! Exercise is safe and beneficial for people with heart failure, and can reduce the risk of hospitalisation. Moving more also helps your muscles and your lungs to work better which puts less strain on your heart. However, it is important not to overdo it. Avoiding exercises that involve heavy weight-lifting or holding your breath is important. Exercising under supervision, such as a cardiac rehab class, can help you to get started.



DID YOU KNOW?

There are around
900,000 people
in the UK
living with heart
failure.



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FURTHER RESOURCES

British Heart Foundation

**Help Line: 0808 802 1234 and
0300 330 3311**

www.bhf.org.uk/

A national charity providing information and advice for the public and for health professionals. A really useful site containing lifestyle advice, the latest research, and information about tests and treatments. There are also British Heart Foundation support groups that are listed on the website.

Heart UK

www.heartuk.org.uk/

National cholesterol charity providing support and advice for people concerned about cholesterol. A great website packed with advice on healthy eating and maintaining a healthy weight, including recipe ideas and diet plans.

NHS Conditions Heart Attack

www.nhs.uk/conditions/heart-attack/

NHS conditions pages contain information about the causes, symptoms, prevention and treatment of heart attacks.

References: NHS conditions www.nhs.uk/conditions/heart-failure/ British Heart Foundation www.bhf.org.uk/information-support/conditions/heart-failure

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