

COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions for Persons with Heart Failure

As a patient with heart failure, it is important to be extra mindful in monitoring your health during this time, particularly as you enter a hospital and/or are discharged to your home or other facility.

What do I need to know about COVID-19 if I have heart failure?

Your condition places you at an elevated risk for complications from COVID-19 if you contract the illness. Your best plan of action is to do everything possible to avoid exposure including:



- ✓ [Washing your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds](#), especially after going to the bathroom; before eating or touching your face; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Always wash your hands with soap and water if your hands are visibly dirty.
- ✓ Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- ✓ Stay home as much as possible and practice social distancing. Refrain from discretionary travel, shopping trips, social visits, and avoid large gatherings of groups.
- ✓ Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces with household cleaners and [EPA-registered disinfectants](#) (e.g., tables, doorknobs, light switches, handles, desks, toilets, faucets, sinks, and electronics including phones, tablets, touchscreens, remote controls, keyboards, etc.).
- ✓ Wear a mask or [cloth face covering](#) in public places including stores, parks, and restaurants.

Hospital systems are so busy right now. Should I still call 911 if I think I might be having a heart attack or stroke?

Yes. Always call 911 at the first signs or symptoms, including: shortness of breath, feelings of exhaustion from routine activities, or difficulty breathing. Calling 911 is still the right thing to do during this time.

I don't think I have COVID-19, but I'm not feeling well. What should I do?

- ✓ Contact your heart failure provider, specialist, or member of your care team. Do not delay calling. If they are unreachable, call the closest care center and find out if they are available to see you.

Remember, even if you feel fine, it's best to act as if you have the virus and therefore, have a chance at spreading it. This is a great way to protect yourself and others from getting sick.

As a heart failure patient, what can I do to prepare or keep in mind during quarantine?

- ✓ Continue to take your regular medications and call your heart failure provider, specialist, or member of your health care team if you notice new symptoms or problems. Make sure you have access to at least 14 days of medications and supplies.
- ✓ If your clinic or doctor's office is not taking appointments, call your heart failure provider or specialist and discuss your needs. Make a list of pertinent information that you will share and discuss before you talk to ensure all your needs are met.
- ✓ Get up-to-date information about COVID-19 from public health officials.
- ✓ Ask family, friends, and your healthcare provider to check on you periodically. For caregivers and family members, stay in touch with family and friends with chronic medical conditions and make sure they have the food and supplies they need.
- ✓ Develop a care plan or update your existing one. Care plans summarize your health conditions, medications, healthcare providers, emergency contacts, and end-of-life options. Complete your care plan in consultation with your provider and with help from a family member or caregiver. See example of care plan here: <https://www.cdc.gov/aging/caregiving/pdf/Complete-Care-Plan-Form-508.pdf>

Disclaimer: This document is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your health care provider with any questions you may have, including your specific medical needs. If you have or suspect that you have a medical problem or condition, please contact a qualified health care professional immediately. If you are in the United States and experiencing a medical emergency, call 911 for emergency medical help immediately.

I'm living in a nursing home/have been moved to a nursing facility and they won't let my family see me. Why?

Those in nursing homes, assisted living facilities, and other types of senior living facilities may be upset, confused, or concerned about recent changes due to COVID-19. As older adults are particularly at risk for contracting coronavirus, additional precautions have been set in place to protect you and your loved ones.

- ✓ Recent studies have suggested that COVID-19 can be spread by people who are not showing symptoms. Since the virus is mainly spread through person-to-person contact, all visitors (including family members) have been restricted.
- ✓ You may have noticed regular checkups for doctors and your fellow residents for fevers and signs of COVID-19. This is to ensure the facility and those that take care of you are kept safe.
- ✓ Ask your facility how your family can stay in contact with you through phone, FaceTime, or window visit.

More Information on COVID-19

Who's at higher risk of complication due to COVID-19:

While overall risk to the population is low, older adults with heart disease appear to be at an elevated risk of contracting COVID-19.

- ✓ People of all ages with underlying medical conditions (particularly if not well-controlled) or those immuno-compromised including persons with severe obesity, asthma, chronic lung disease (COPD), diabetes, and chronic kidney disease may also face higher risk of complications if they do get infected.
- ✓ Stroke survivors may also be at increased risk for developing complications due to COVID-19.

Are there any medications, supplements, or treatments for COVID-19?

No. Currently, there is no evidence that anything protects you from the virus other than practicing social distancing, hand-washing, and other preventive measures recommended by the CDC. Until a treatment is approved or vaccine developed, be skeptical of any claims. For more information, look at the World Health Organization's "[Myth Busters](#)" portal.

I'm worried and stressed about what's happening. What are some helpful coping tips?

- ✓ Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories, including social media. Hearing about the pandemic repeatedly can be upsetting.
- ✓ Take care of your body: Taking a deep breath, stretching, or daily meditation can be helpful. Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals, exercise regularly, and get plenty of sleep.
- ✓ Make time to unwind. Try to do some activities you enjoy or learn a new skill or hobby.
- ✓ Connect with others using phone, FaceTime, or other virtual chat tools. Talk with people you trust about your concerns and how you are feeling.

References:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Daily Life & Coping – Household Checklist." CDC.gov. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/checklist-household-ready.html> (accessed April 9, 2020)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Get Your Home Ready – Detailed Planning Guidance." CDC.gov. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/get-your-household-ready-for-COVID-19.html> (accessed April 9, 2020)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Daily Life & Coping – Stress and Coping." CDC.gov. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/managing-stress-anxiety.html> (accessed April 9, 2020)
- American Heart Association. "Questions We All Have Regarding Coronavirus." Heart.org. <https://www.heart.org/en/coronavirus/coronavirus-questions/questions-we-all-have>

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The Heart Failure community¹, including professional and patient advocacy organizations, has developed a number of resources to support those with heart failure, caregivers, and family members during COVID-19. Below, are some examples of resources to help you navigate heart failure hospitalization and discharge during this time.

American Association of Heart Failure Nurses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take Preventative Action Against COVID-19 • Ways to Cope with Stress • Shopping for Food and Other Household Essentials • Protecting Yourself While Shopping • Facebook Live Webinars 	American College of Cardiology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CardioSmart COVID-19 Hub for Patients • Coronavirus and People with Heart Conditions: What You Need to Know: Webinar² • Coronavirus and Your Heart: Don't Ignore Heart Symptoms
American Heart Association <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AHA COVID-19 Resources & Guidances • AHA COVID-19 Professional Resources • AHA HF & COVID Podcast for Professionals (Transcript) • COVID-19 Newsroom • COVID-19 and Adult CPR & Children and Infant CPR Infographic • Coronavirus Q&A (Sections include: Questions we all have; If You're a Patient; Still Out and About?; If You're Hunkering Down) • COVID-19 Video Library: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Coronavirus: What heart and stroke patients need to know ○ Why does hand-washing work? ○ Coronavirus safety tips 	
Caregiver Action Network <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COVID-19 and Family Caregiving 	Heart Failure Society of America <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HFSA Coronavirus Patient Resources³
Mended Hearts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COVID-19 Support Webinars & Resources 	National Alliance for Caregiving <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COVID-19 Resources for Families
National Transitions of Care Coalition <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COVID-19 Health Management Tool 	WomenHeart <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COVID-19 and Heart Disease • For Women with Heart Disease: What you Need to Know About Living During the COVID-19 Pandemic Factsheet • AAHFN/WomenHeart – Heart Failure and COVID-19 Facebook Live

¹ PCNA and ABC COVID-19 resources primarily focus on professional guidance.

² Collaboration with Mended Hearts.

³ Articles compiled from HFSA, AHA, and ACC.

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