Heart Failure and Depression

This handout explains ways to manage depression when you have heart failure.

Some react differently after being diagnosed with heart failure. You may be in denial or have anxiety, fear, and depression. These feelings are normal. Depression is common in patients in the hospital and those with heart failure.

Depression is a medical condition, not a flaw in a person. It is ok to feel this way, but it is important to be aware of your feelings. Depression can lead to more heart failure symptoms, lower your quality of life and make heart failure harder to treat. Getting help for depression can improve your overall health.

Signs of Depression

Depression and heart failure can share some of the same symptoms. Talk with your care team if you notice any signs of depression. Symptoms include:

- Feeling sad, lonely, and gloomy most of the day
- Having less energy or no energy to do things that you used to do
- Needing more or less sleep
- No desire for food or eating more food than usual
- Weight changes
- Having thoughts of guilt, worthlessness, hopelessness or suicide
- Feeling like you have nothing to live for

Signs of Heart Failure

Symptoms of heart failure include:

- No energy
- Tire easily
- Feeling crabby and on edge
- Loss of appetite
- Hard to breathe when at rest or lying flat.
- Weight gain despite loss of appetite
- Swollen abdomen, legs, arms, and face
- Feeling out of breath or shortness of breath
- Coughing
- Chest congestion

Healthy Habits

Healthy habits can help you feel better and improve your heart failure and depression. Learn about how heart failure affects you and how you cope with stress. Write down what helps you cope and what does not help. Some healthy habits include:

- **No** tobacco and alcohol
- Eating a heart-healthy diet
- Exercising
- Getting enough sleep
- Taking your medicines
- Talking to your family and friends
- Staying active with your hobbies/activities that you like to do
- Learning to avoid blaming yourself.
- Writing a “to do list” and resting in between tasks
- Giving yourself time to grieve.
- Joining a support group.
- Counseling

Resources

American Heart Association
www.heart.org (search depression)

Heart Failure Society of America
www.hfsa.org (search depression)

Mended Hearts, Inc.
mendedhearts.org (search depression)

National Alliance on Mental Illness/Wisconsin
https://namiwisconsin.org

National Alliance on Mental Health - Dane County
www.namidanecounty.org
(608) 249-7188
contact@namidanecounty.org

Who to Call

If you have questions, please contact your provider through MyChart or call your provider listed in your After Visit Summary or After Hospital Care Plan. For a list of UW Health Clinics, visit www.uwhealth.org/.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 11/2025 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#6885