



Focus on life. Focus on health. *Stay focused.*

## Achieve Your Best Health

*Health Coaching for Heart Failure*



**BlueChoice<sup>®</sup>  
HealthPlan**  
South Carolina



## What is health coaching?

Health coaching is a voluntary program for members diagnosed with certain health conditions. We take a personalized and tailored approach that helps you manage your condition and cope with everyday issues so you can meet your health goals.

You'll have a personal coach to support, guide and motivate you to make healthy lifestyle changes at your own pace. Your coach can:

- Help identify barriers to reaching and maintaining your health goals.
- Personalize your plan for better health.
- Help you find a physician if you don't have one.
- Help you get the most out of your health benefits.

## Is health coaching for me?

Health coaching is especially helpful to members who:

- Want to know more about managing their health condition(s).
- Make frequent emergency room visits.
- Use multiple medications for their health condition(s).
- Experience frequent hospitalizations.

## Your personal health coach

Your coach will work with you to establish goals for your health, then help you work toward achieving your goals. Each health coach is a health care professional with extensive training and knowledge. Your personal coach is a partner who can guide and support you to make positive lifestyle changes to better manage your health.

## We are here for you

We know it's not always easy to make a lifestyle change and stick to it. Our health coaches will ensure you have the information and tools to make the transition to a healthier lifestyle. We also understand that managing a health condition can be complicated. You can feel confident knowing your coach is there to support you each step of the way. Also, your personal information is safe. Your health coach is a professional who respects your privacy and will keep the details of your action plan confidential.

Our health coaches care about you and want to help you reach your health goals. Your coach can provide the encouragement, support and education you need. He or she can help you identify the barriers that keep you from reaching your health goals, adopt healthy habits that fit your lifestyle and connect you with other helpful resources.

As you take steps to manage your health, you may face challenges. But you can overcome them with the help of your friends, family and our health coaching team!

# What do you need to know about heart failure?

Heart failure is a condition in which your heart's ability to pump blood is weaker than normal. When your heart pumps blood at a slower rate, your body does not receive the oxygen and nutrients needed to function at its best. There are two types of heart failure: left-sided and right-sided. You may have one type or both types.

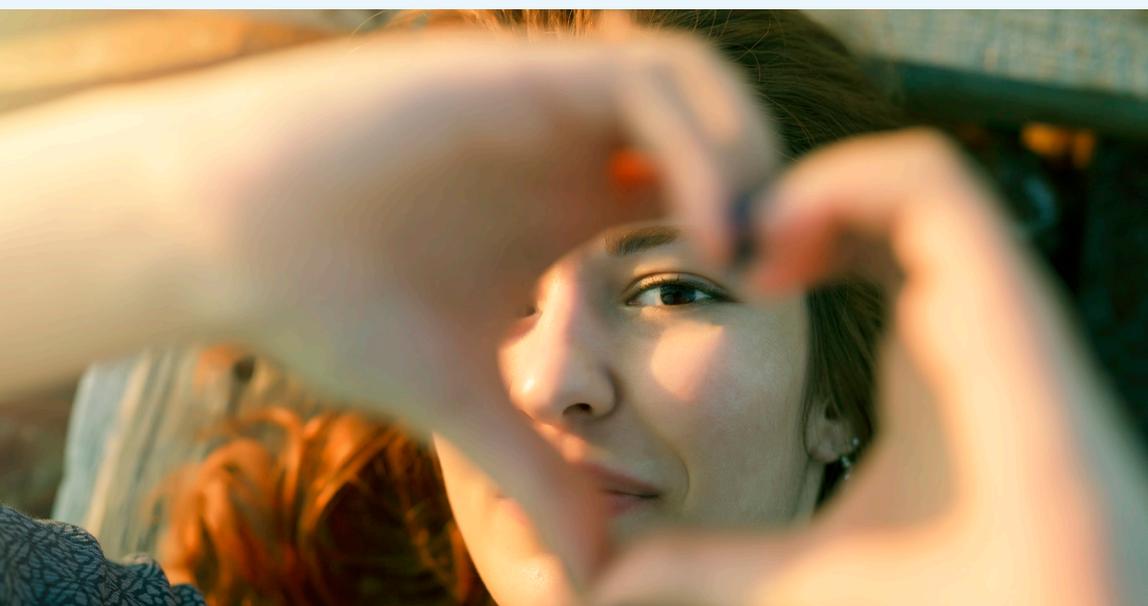
## What causes heart failure?

Causes may include:

- Heart attack
- Uncontrolled high blood pressure
- Heart disease
- Lung disease
- Heart valve disease or infection
- Alcohol or drug abuse
- Diabetes

Signs and symptoms:

- Sudden, severe shortness of breath
- Swelling of the legs, ankles and feet
- Rapid or irregular heartbeat
- Sudden weight gain from fluid retention
- Lack of appetite
- Difficulty concentrating or decreased alertness



## What can you do to help manage your symptoms?

**Follow a heart-healthy diet.** Limit your sodium intake to 1,500 mg or less per day. Fill your plate with whole grains, fruits, vegetables and lean protein. Avoid processed meats like bacon, sausage, cold cuts and high-cholesterol foods like margarine, baked goods, fried foods and snack foods.

**Limit your caffeine intake.** It can make your heart beat faster.

**Don't smoke.** If you do, work with your health coach to develop a quit plan that's right for you.

**Exercise regularly.** It can lower your blood pressure and significantly improve your heart health. Aim for 30 minutes of physical activity, five days a week.

**Practice good oral hygiene.** This is especially important when you have heart disease. To avoid infections and other complications, brush your teeth twice a day and schedule dental cleanings every six months.

**Monitor your blood pressure.** Consistent high blood pressure can damage your heart, so it's important to monitor your blood pressure and keep it under control. Ideal blood pressure for an adult is less than 120/80 (or 120 over 80).

**Manage your cholesterol.** Low-density lipoprotein (LDL) is known as "bad cholesterol" because it can harden and block your arteries and deprive your heart of oxygen. High-density lipoprotein (HDL) is known as "good cholesterol" because it protects your heart. Your LDL should be less than 100. Men should have an HDL of 40 or higher. Women's HDL should be 50 or higher. A healthy total cholesterol level is 200 mg/dL or less.

**Reduce your risk for infections.** Having heart failure puts you at higher risk of developing infections, such as pneumonia. Stay away from people who are ill, wash your hands frequently and get plenty of rest to help prevent infections.

# Don't neglect your emotional health

## Manage stress

Individuals with certain health conditions may be more likely to feel down or depressed, and stress can make any of us feel worse. Take time for yourself, identify ways to minimize your stress and talk to your doctor if you have feelings of depression or anxiety. Here are some tips:

**Exercise.** Even moderate exercise can help reduce stress and relieve depression.

**Relaxation and breathing exercises.** Relaxation exercises, such as yoga, are proven to help relieve stress.

**Relax and communicate.** When you feel tired, take a break. And when you feel stressed, talk it out. Sharing your thoughts with others can help.

**Think positively.** Be mindful of your "self talk" — the mental images you create for yourself.

**Don't depend on alcohol, tobacco or other drugs to cope with stress.** If you think you may be dependent on any of these substances, contact your doctor right away for help.



“I am so glad we have a program available to us and that I can call with any questions. I think I am doing a good job, but it is nice to know that I can call when I need to.”

– Health coaching participant

## Tackle the blues

When you have a health condition, you may be more likely to feel down or depressed. Depression is common, but treatable. To see if you may need additional support, look over these statements and think about how you’ve felt in the last two weeks. Check if you have:

- Felt sad or down.
- Not cared about things you liked before.
- Been eating more or less than usual.
- Felt tired.
- Felt anxious.
- Not been able to think or make up your mind.
- Felt like you are not worth much.
- Been sleeping more or less than usual.
- Thought about dying or killing yourself.

If you checked five or more, talk to your health care provider or your health coach about whether you might be depressed. If you are, it’s important to get help so you can get back to enjoying life.

## Your relationship with your health care team is important

The best thing for preventing complications with heart failure is to develop a good relationship with your health care team, which may include your primary care physician, a cardiologist, a physical therapist, a health coach and others. Keeping open communication with your health care team is important and helps you play an active role in your care.

### During your visit

Questions for your health care team may include:

- Is my heart failure mild, moderate or severe?
- How might this affect my life in the coming weeks, months and years?
- What are the three most important things I can do to manage this condition?
- Do you recommend cardiac rehabilitation?
- Are there any side effects to my medicine? Is there anything I can do about them?
- If my symptoms seem to get worse or change suddenly, what is the best way to contact you?
- When should I come back for a follow-up appointment?



## Medications can help

Your doctor may prescribe an angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitor, an angiotensin receptor blocker (ARB) or a beta blocker to help improve your heart health. These medicines help lower your blood pressure, reduce your risk of heart attacks and strokes, and keep your kidneys healthy.

Your doctor may also prescribe diuretics. These medicines work by eliminating excess sodium (salt) and water from your body to help control blood pressure.

Digoxin is used to treat heart failure and abnormal heart rhythms (arrhythmias). It helps control your heart rate so that your heart works better.

If you have been taking these medicines for six months or longer, it is important to follow up with your doctor for recommended lab tests to make sure your medication regimen is working.

Recommended lab tests are:

- Serum potassium therapeutic monitoring test and serum creatinine therapeutic monitoring test
- Digoxin test (digoxin users only)

## Participant's Bill of Rights

Health coaches respect the wishes of participants and their family members and recognize that participants have RIGHTS and RESPONSIBILITIES, including the:

- Right to know the philosophy and characteristics of the health coaching program.
- Right to have personally identifiable health information shared by the health coaching program only in accordance with state and federal law.
- Right to identify a staff member and his or her job title, and to speak with a supervisor of a staff member, if requested.
- Right to receive accurate information from the health coaching program.
- Right to receive administrative information about changes in or termination of the health coaching program.
- Right to decline participation, revoke consent or disenroll at any time.
- Responsibility to submit any forms necessary to participate in the program, to the extent the law requires.
- Responsibility to give accurate clinical and contact information, and to notify the health coaching program of changes in this information.
- Responsibility to notify their treating providers of their participation in the health coaching program, if applicable.

Health coaches inform members of these rights and uphold them at all times during the program. All members receive a written copy of these rights and responsibilities within 30 days of program enrollment.

**“Thank you for being there for me. The combination of having you and my doctor has really turned my life around.”**

**– Health coaching participant**

# You make the choice

*Health coaching is completely voluntary and free.*

Your decision to participate will not affect your health benefits in any way. If you decide that having a personal health coach is not for you, you can opt out of the program at any time by calling 855-838-5897. If you have a problem or complaint during your health coaching experience, you can call 855-838-5897 and ask to speak to the program manager. In an emergency, please contact your doctor or call 911.

## Additional resources

These resources can provide additional information about living well with heart failure. These are independent organizations that provide health information on behalf of your health plan.

American Heart Association

[www.Heart.org](http://www.Heart.org)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

[www.CDC.gov/HeartDisease](http://www.CDC.gov/HeartDisease)

National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute

[www.nhlbi.nih.gov](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov)

Women Heart: The National Coalition for Women with Heart Disease

[www.WomenHeart.org](http://www.WomenHeart.org)

*These links lead to third party websites. Those companies are solely responsible for the contents and privacy policies on their sites.*

*The information contained in this brochure is for educational purposes only. It does not represent a standard of care. Your physician must determine the appropriateness of the information in light of all your circumstances. It is important to discuss options with your physician when deciding on the best treatment for you.*

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