



Staying motivated



Making practical changes to your life, can have a big impact on the way you cope and live with heart failure.

For example, you probably have several medicines to take each day, in particular ways and at specific times.

You will have appointments to attend, your diet is likely to change and you may have given up smoking and/or drinking as well.

It can all seem a bit overwhelming. However, there are always things you can do, for example:

- **Keep track of your goals in a diary!** Looking back at the goals you have set for yourself will help you stay motivated. We know that people that do not engage in their self-care, tend to find their symptoms getting worse¹.
- **Monitor how you are feeling.** Use your diary to keep track of your mood and make sure you contact your healthcare provider if you experience long periods of low moods or anxiety. Mental health issues commonly experienced by people with heart failure, such as depression and anxiety, can reduce people's motivation. Patients suffering with these problems are more likely to find themselves back in hospital².

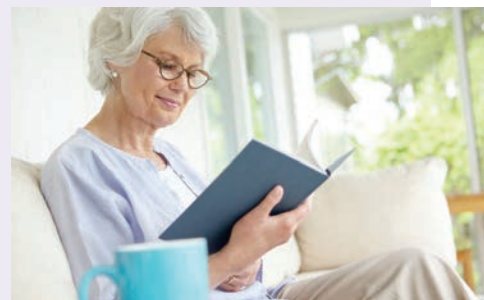
Depression and anxiety, can reduce people's motivation.



There are many ways of increasing your motivation, and of developing confidence in your own ability to manage your condition. If either of these is a problem for you, try some of the tips that follow, and see if they make it easier for you to stick to your treatment and self-care plans.

- **Reward yourself for sticking to your treatment and self-care regimes.**

This works best if you reward yourself at regular intervals, for example every few days, or every week. Do not leave it too long between rewards, and try to make the reward something that you will really enjoy, like a trip to the cinema, a new book to read or a phone call to a friend.



- **Remember that it is never too late to make a fresh start.**

Even if you slip up now and then, that does not mean that all is lost. Just start again and keep going!

- **Form habits.**

Once taking your medication and taking care of yourself have become routine tasks, it will be much easier to complete them.

- **Remind yourself — often — why you are making all of these changes.**

The goal is to manage your condition and get more from life. You may want to write this down on a sticky note and put it somewhere prominent. Some people even design posters or wall art to remind themselves why change is worthwhile.



- **Set small, measureable goals.**

Start with the simplest, easiest step that you can take, then do the next simplest, then the next simplest, and so on. Acknowledge your achievement each time you reach a goal, however small it may seem.

- **Make sure you are getting enough rest.**

It's hard to be motivated when you are tired.

- **Look for things in life to be grateful for.** Think of friends and family you love; the pleasure of being outdoors, or in a warm, cosy home; the hobbies and pastimes you enjoy. If you manage your heart failure effectively, you will be able to experience and savour even more of these things, and that is a very motivating thought.



- **Try some classic 'brain foods' like fish and whole grains, to give yourself a mental boost.** A balanced diet is good for motivation and for your heart.
- **If you feel particularly low and un-motivated, contact a positive, friendly person for a chat.**
- **Always make time for fun.** Having fun is very motivating, and energising.



Remember, you will find it easier to stick to your treatment plan if you establish a routine. The tips provided here will help you get your motivation up and keep it there! If you feel low, worried or lacking energy, you must talk to a member of your healthcare team to get more advice.

If you happen to have an urgent medical concern, please call your doctor, go to your local emergency room, or call your local Emergency Contact number. Remember, your doctor is your primary source for information on your condition and treatment. Be sure to speak with them if you have any questions or concerns.

References

1. Van der Wal MH, Jaarsma T, Moser DK, van Gilst WH, van Veldhuisen DJ. Unraveling the mechanism for heart failure patients' beliefs about compliance. *Heart Lung* 2007 Jul-Aug; 36(4): 253-61.
2. Tsuchihashi-Makaya M, Kato N, Chishaki A, Takeshita A, Tsutsui H. Anxiety and poor social support are independently associated with adverse outcomes in patients with mild heart failure. *Circ J* 2009; 73: 280-287.