



Preparing for an appointment

Your appointment is a good chance to discuss your ongoing condition with your doctor and discuss better ways of managing it. Here's how to make the most of every consult.

Monitor your symptoms

It's important for your doctor to know about any changing symptoms. This will allow your doctor to better treat and manage your condition. Common signs include:

- Needing to sleep propped up
- Shortness of breath
- Swollen feet or ankles
- New or persistent coughing
- Increased tiredness affecting your everyday life

It can also help to talk about your symptoms with family and friends, as they may notice changes you have missed.

Keep a list of current medicines and tests and take it with you to doctors appointment

Keeping a list is important so all the doctors you see know which medicines you're taking and which medical tests you've had. Don't forget to include dosage of the medication and any other supplements you take, like vitamins.

Write down your questions and concerns

It can be hard to remember all the questions you want to ask your doctor. So, in the days leading up to the appointment, be prepared and make a list. These questions could be about side effects of medicines, ways to improve your condition, or practical questions about your care. Write everything down. It can also be helpful to bring a friend or family member to be part of the discussion. Don't forget to write down the doctor's advice. This is where a support person can help after the appointment in case you miss something.

It's also helpful to make some practical steps with your doctor to work on for the next appointment. Setting small goals can make a big difference, building confidence and giving you something to aim for.

Examples of things to talk to your doctor about include:

1. **Telling your doctor how you're feeling. Try to be as specific as you can about changes in your symptoms. Give examples of how heart failure affects you in your daily life, such as:**
 - I can't do activities I used to enjoy, like mowing the lawn or walking the dog, because I get tired easily
 - I have trouble breathing at night, so I need to sleep propped up on pillows
 - When I walk up a flight of stairs, I get short of breath quickly
 - My feet or ankles are swollen
 - I find myself coughing even when I don't have a cold
2. **Some examples of questions you might want to ask your doctor include:**
 - How do you think my heart failure will affect my daily activities, like walking to the shops, mowing the lawn, or baking?
 - What can I expect with my heart failure over the next few months and years?
 - What changes can I make in my life to help improve my condition?
 - What are the possible side effects of my medicines?
 - If my other health conditions affect my heart failure, what can I do?

References: 1. Chen L et al. Snapshot of heart failure in Australia. May 2017. 2. Heart Foundation Australia. Living Well with Heart Failure. 2020; available at: [https://www.heartfoundation.org.au/getmedia/8208421c-4a7a-4ed8-ad26-f68de52aa935/201125_Living-well-with-heart-failure-booklet-\(1\).pdf](https://www.heartfoundation.org.au/getmedia/8208421c-4a7a-4ed8-ad26-f68de52aa935/201125_Living-well-with-heart-failure-booklet-(1).pdf) (accessed September 2021).