

Living with Heart Failure: Your Emotional Health



When you have been diagnosed with a long-term illness like heart failure, it is normal to feel a lot of different emotions including:

- Anger
- Curiosity
- Fear/Worry
- Frustration
- Gratitude
- Guilt
- Loneliness
- Motivation
- Overwhelmed
- Sadness
- Surprise
- Uncertainty

While having a range of emotions is normal, if your negative emotions continue or interfere with your normal everyday activities, you may be experiencing **depression**. Depression can impact your ability to recover and may put you at risk for future health concerns.

What is depression?

Depression is characterized by persistently sad or down feelings and a loss of interest in activities, causing significant impairment in daily life.

Symptoms of depression may include:

- Feelings of sadness, emptiness or hopelessness
- Sleeping too much or too little, trouble falling asleep or staying asleep
- Changes in appetite
- Fatigue
- Loss of interest or pleasure in activities that used to be enjoyable
- Restlessness, jitteriness, feeling worried
- Anger, agitation, irritability
- Trouble concentrating, thinking, or making decisions
- Problems with memory
- Change in your sexual desire
- Thoughts of death or suicide

How do I know when to seek help for symptoms of depression?

If you experience any of the symptoms of depression for 2 weeks or longer, contact your heart doctor or primary care doctor for help and support.

Your safety and your life matter

Suicidal thoughts or thinking about death, dying or not wanting to wake-up should not be ignored. If you find yourself having suicidal thoughts or feelings, call 9-1-1, go to the nearest emergency room or call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at **(800) 273-8255**. The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and provides free and confidential support. Chat options are also available through their website: <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>

How can I get emotional support for heart failure if I need it?

Your doctor is a good resource for finding the emotional support that's right for you. Your primary care doctor or heart doctor can:

- Determine if further support is needed
- Connect you to additional support services, like social workers

Social workers are professionals trained to talk with you and help you understand and cope with your feelings and emotions. We have social workers in both the inpatient and outpatient settings at Michigan Medicine.

How can I reach a social worker?

- **Outpatient Social Work**

Call the Frankel Cardiovascular Center social worker at:

(734) 232-1559

- **Inpatient Social Work**

Ask your nurse or doctor to contact social work for you, or you may call us at **(800) 888-9825** Monday- Friday, 9:00am to 4:30pm.

What additional resources are available?

- National Alliance for Mental Illness
<https://www.nami.org/>
- Anxiety and Depression Association of America
<https://adaa.org/>

- Mended Hearts
<https://mendedhearts.org/>
- Michigan Medicine Psychiatry Depression Toolkit
<https://www.depressioncenter.org/depression-toolkit>

What can I do to manage my feelings and emotions?

Managing your emotions is one way to gain more control so you can start to feel better. Recognizing your emotions is the first step to managing them. Practicing some daily self-care can help make your emotions feel less overwhelming.

Some helpful actions you can take include:

- Set small goals for yourself every day
- Walk/exercise daily within your limits
- Get enough sleep and rest
- Participate in hobbies and social activities that you enjoy
- Share your concerns and successes with a supportive person
- Journal, or keep a regular record of your experiences and feelings
- Learn and use stress-reduction techniques (meditation, prayer etc.)
- Take an active role in your health
- Join a Support Group for people with heart failure and their families.

Call the CVC social worker at **(734) 232-1559** for more information.

Heart Failure: Your Emotional Health. Heart Failure Education Binder. Michigan Medicine. Licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International Public License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/). Last Revised: 11/2020 CVC #1339

