Living every day with my heart failure
Cover illustration:
The painting on the front cover represents different clans/tribes all travelling on the connecting pathways to having healthy hearts and lifestyles. Artwork by Tina Weston (Barkindji).

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Funded by and in consultation with:
Heart Foundation Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Chronic Heart Failure Working Group.

With thanks to:
• Aboriginal Medical Service Western Sydney, NSW
• Ceduna Koonibba Aboriginal Health Service, SA
• Galambila Aboriginal Health Service Inc, Coffs Harbour, NSW
• Pika Wiya Health Service Inc, Port Augusta, SA
• Wuchopperen Health Service, Cairns, QLD
• and all others who contributed to this booklet.

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Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should be aware that the following information may contain images or names of people that may cause distress to certain viewers.

Illustrations are copyright of Dreamtime Public Relations Pty Ltd.
This is your book

This book has been designed as a practical resource for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It will help you and your family look after your heart.

Keeping your book up-to-date will help you and your doctor.

Name: _______________________________________________________

I started this book on: __________________________________________

My health worker or nurse is: __________________________________

Phone ______________________________________________________

My doctor is: ____________________________ Phone _______________

My clinic is: _____________________________ Phone _______________

My pharmacist is: ________________________ Phone _______________

Family and community helpers:

Name: ___________________________________________ Phone ___________

Name: ___________________________________________ Phone ___________

Name: ___________________________________________ Phone ___________

Many people do not just have heart failure. They may also have diabetes (sugar), kidney disease, lung problems, high blood pressure or other sicknesses.

All of these sicknesses affect each other and can be managed together.

Your health worker, nurse or doctor can help you fill out this book. A family member can be with you.
We need to treat the body as a whole, connecting the body, heart, soul, spirit, environment and culture of the whole person to their family and their community.
About this book

The sections of this book have been colour coded to help you easily find different information that can help you manage your heart failure.

Contents

What is heart failure? ................................................................. 1

How does heart failure make you feel? ................................. 3

When I feel sick what should I do? ................................. 7

Shortness of breath ................................................................. 7

Fluid ................................................................................. 9

Salt ..................................................................................... 17

Chest pain ........................................................................... 19

Exercise ............................................................................. 21

Medicines ............................................................................ 23

How you can make your heart feel better .................. 27

My records ............................................................................ 29

My heart failure action plan .............................................. 33
What is heart failure?

Heart failure is when your heart gets damaged, becomes bigger and weaker and doesn’t work properly. This causes extra fluid to build up in your body and sometimes in your lungs.

Lots of things can hurt your heart including:
- heart attack
- high blood pressure
- too much fat in your blood
- alcohol (grog)
- too much sugar (diabetes).

Heart failure is a serious heart problem and help from your health worker, nurse or doctor is really important. Work with them to help improve your heart and health. You can’t always make the heart strong like it used to be but you can help the heart to work. This will make it easier to do things with your kids, your family and your community.
How does heart failure make you feel?

Which of these worries you the most?

- Too much fluid
- Swollen ankles or stomach
- Hard to breathe or shortness of breath
- Putting on weight quickly
- Coughing
- Feeling tired
- Pain in chest
- Feeling dizzy
- Heart pounding or beating fast
- Weak heart
- Feeling tired
How does heart failure make you feel?

☐ Short of breath

What can you do?

- Talk to your health worker, nurse or doctor if you are more breathless than usual.
- See the ‘Shortness of breath’ section in this booklet on page 7.

☐ Swollen ankles, legs or stomach

What can you do?

- Measure how much fluid you have each day.
- Limit your salt intake.
- Weigh yourself daily.
- Talk to your health worker, nurse or doctor about how much fluid you should have in a day.
- See the ‘Fluid’ section in this booklet on page 9 and the ‘Salt’ section on page 17.

☐ Chest pain

What can you do?

- If you get chest pain, stop, rest and take your anginine or nitrolingual spray.
- If the chest pain does not go away, call ‘Triple Zero (000)’ (112 for mobiles) and ask for an ambulance.
- See the ‘Chest pain’ section in this booklet on page 19.
Heart pounding or going too fast (palpitations)

What can you do?

- Talk to your health worker, nurse or doctor if your heart is beating faster than usual.

Feeling tired

As your heart may not be pumping blood as strongly as it should, you may feel tired.

What can you do?

- Exercise each day to help your heart pump better.
- See the ‘Exercise’ section in this booklet on page 21.
- Ask for help if you need it.

Feeling dizzy

Dizziness can be caused by low blood pressure and some medicines.

What can you do?

- Stop and rest.
- Stand up slowly when you have been sitting or lying down.
- Talk to your health worker, nurse or doctor.
How does heart failure make you feel?

☐ Feeling sad or worried

What can you do?

- If you are feeling sad or worried, this could be depression.
- Talk to your health worker, nurse or doctor.

☐ Coughing

You may cough more at night because there is too much fluid in your lungs. Sometimes medicines can give you a dry cough.

What can you do?

- If you are coughing, talk to your health worker, nurse or doctor.

☐ Not hungry

If you are not hungry, you may have too much fluid in your stomach or you may not be going to the toilet often enough (constipated).

What can you do?

- Eat smaller meals more often.
- Talk to your health worker, nurse or doctor.
☐ Not going to the toilet often enough (constipation)

**What can you do?**

- Exercise and move around more.
- Drink enough water (remember to measure how much you drink, see page 15).
- Eat more fresh fruit and vegetables.
- Talk to your health worker, nurse or doctor because sometimes medicine can help.

Which one is the hardest for you to manage?
When I feel sick what should I do?

There are a number of signs that will let you know when you need help with managing your heart failure. In this book, they are called ‘Get Help Signs’.

These are sometimes also called ‘symptoms’. When symptoms or ‘Get Help Signs’ worsen you will need to see your health worker, nurse or doctor.

Shortness of breath

You can get short of breath from heart failure, lung disease, smoking and asthma.

In heart failure, being short of breath is often the first thing you notice. It is caused by fluid in the lungs. This fluid can also make you cough and wake up at night.

When I get short of breath, I can’t do things like:

_______________________________________________

Do you need to sit up higher to sleep?

☐ Do you sleep all night? ☐ Yes ☐ No

☐ Can you lie flat to sleep? ☐ Yes ☐ No

☐ How often does shortness of breath or coughing wake you up? ________________________________

Can you walk as far?

☐ Do you get short of breath when you walk?

☐ Yes ☐ No

☐ When I feel well, I can walk to: ________________

☐ When I feel sick, I can only walk to: ____________
Sitting up in bed
Mary normally sleeps with no pillows. She knows that if she wakes in the night and can’t breathe well that she needs to go to the clinic or visit her doctor.

Feeling breathless

Important ‘Get Help Signs’ are:
- can’t lie down to sleep
- need to sit up more at night
- more breathless or new cough
- not able to walk to __________
- other ____________________
Fluid

When you have heart failure your heart doesn’t pump properly and you get more fluid in your body. This can make you weigh more or make your ankles, legs or other parts of your body swell up. It is important to know when fluid in your body is building up so you can do something early.

What can you do if you have extra fluid in your body

Keep a record of your weight

• If you have scales at home, weigh yourself every day.

• If you don’t have scales, your health worker can weigh you at the clinic or health service.

• Know what your ‘dry’ weight is.

• If you put on weight quickly, more than 2 kg in two days, call your health worker or the clinic.

How much do you weigh when you feel well?
(This is called dry weight.)

_________________________ kg

How much do you weigh when you don’t feel well?

_________________________ kg

How do you know when you have extra fluid in your body?

________________________________________________

________________________________________________

________________________________________________
Weigh in

Bob normally weighs 95 kg but today he has puffy ankles, so he is going to the clinic to see his health worker and get weighed.

Important ‘Get Help Signs’ are:

☐ putting on weight quickly
☐ swollen ankles, stomach or legs
☐ loss of appetite
☐ other ______________________
To manage your fluid you should:

• talk to your health worker, nurse or doctor about how much fluid you can have

• measure how much fluid you can have each day (usually about 1000–1500 mL a day (1–1½ litres)).

**How to measure fluids**

• Measure how much your usual cup or glass holds and keep a record of how many you drink.

OR

• Fill a jug with your allowance each morning and drink from this during the day – allow water for tablet times.

**My usual cup = ______ mL.**

**I can have ______ cups to drink each day.**

You might need more when it is very hot – check with your health worker, nurse or doctor.

**If you get thirsty you can:**

• chew sugarless gum

• suck on a small amount of ice chips – remember to count these in your daily fluid.
Check how much fluid your cups, jugs and bottles contain.

Manage your fluid intake
George has a mark on his jug to show him what his fluid limit is. He fills his jug to the mark every morning and uses this water for his kettle too.

Important ‘Get Help Signs’ are:
- putting on weight quickly
- swollen ankles, stomach or legs
- loss of appetite
- other _______________________

GET HELP

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To help stop shortness of breath and swelling, you should only have a small amount of fluid each day.

What do I count as fluids or drinks?

- Water, juice and soft drinks
- Soups
- Ice-cream
- Jelly
- Tea and coffee
- Milk
- Fruit with lots of water (e.g. watermelon)
- Alcohol
- Cola and other drinks
- Ice

Coffee and cola can cause high blood pressure and make your heart race and not pump properly, so:

- don’t have more than one coffee or cola a day
- remember to count all these drinks in your fluid total.

Alcohol can cause more damage to your heart. Talk to your health worker, nurse or doctor about this.
Some fluids are:

- Water, juice and soft drinks
- Soups
- Ice-cream
- Jelly
- Coffee, tea, milk
- Watermelon
My fluid plan

Talk to your health worker, nurse or doctor about what you have been drinking and work out a plan.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>What I can have</th>
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<tr>
<td>Breakfast</td>
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<td>Morning tea</td>
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<td>Lunch</td>
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<td>Dinner</td>
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<td>Supper</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Talk to your health worker, nurse or doctor about what you have been drinking and work out a plan.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>How much</th>
<th>mL</th>
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**TOTAL** mL
Salt

Salt is sometimes called ‘sodium’ and is hidden in lots of food.
Salt holds fluid in your body and will make you sick.

Some salty foods include:
• meat, such as ham, bacon, sausages, hot dogs, tinned meat, corned meat and pies
• take-away foods, such as hamburgers, pizza, hot chips, noodles, potato chips, many Asian foods, pasta and fried chicken
• other foods, such as tinned and instant soup, packet seasoning, stock cubes, soy sauce, instant noodles, sports drinks, soda water, salted nuts, fish in brine, tomato sauce, pickles, olives and dips.

Salty foods that I should cut down are:
________________________________________________
________________________________________________
________________________________________________

Good heart food

Fresh fruit, vegetables and lean meats are healthy foods and do not usually contain very much salt. Lemon juice, garlic, herbs and spices can all be used to make food more tasty without adding extra salt.

Good foods that I like are:
________________________________________________
________________________________________________
________________________________________________
Salt = too much fluid = too much swelling/weight = shortness of breath = too much fluid for your heart to pump

Nutrition Information

| Typical Values | Provides 100g | Energy 109kcal/432kJ | Protein 4.2g | Carbohydrate 14.1g | of which sugars 14.1g | Fat 2.9g | of which Saturates 1.8g | Fibre nil | Sodium 120mg |

Check the label for hidden salt

- Check the labels on the food you buy for salt content.
- Avoid foods with more than 120 mg of salt (sodium) per 100 g.
- Other ______________

Salty foods

Good heart foods – fresh fruit, vegetables, lean meats

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Chest pain

The heart needs a good blood supply to work properly. Without it, you may get pain, tightness, heaviness or discomfort around the heart.

These feelings can happen in the chest, neck, jaw, throat, shoulders, arms or back. You may also feel dizzy, short of breath or like vomiting, or have a cold sweat.

You may have some or all of these feelings.

This chest pain may be angina or the warning signs of heart attack.

If you get these feelings:

• Stop and rest.
• If rest does not bring relief, take a dose of your angina medicine.
• If the feelings are not relieved within 5 minutes, take another dose of your angina medicine.
• If the feelings are not completely relieved within 10 minutes of onset by rest and medicine OR is severe OR gets worse quickly, **this is an emergency. Get help fast.**
• Call Triple Zero (000) (112 for mobiles) and ask for an ambulance. Don’t hang up. Wait for advice from the operator.
Call Triple Zero (000) (112 for mobiles) to ask for an ambulance.

See your action plan in the back of this book.
Exercise

Exercise will help your heart get stronger and make you less tired. Before you start exercising, talk to your health worker, nurse or doctor about an exercise plan to suit you.

There are lots of ways to get exercise:
• walking is a good way to exercise
• when you walk, you should be lightly puffing but still able to talk
• arm exercises are good, so lift light weights such as cans of tinned food or a packet of rice
• plan your exercise with your health worker, nurse or doctor
• start slowly
• do not strain with heavy weights
• do not exercise in extreme temperatures
• avoid strenuous exercise
• stop exercising if you become breathless or experience chest pain.

Resting
• Make sure you plan at least one rest every day.

What exercise do you like to do?
__________________________________________________

How often do you exercise?
__________________________________________________

What is a good arm exercise for you?
__________________________________________________

What things could you do for exercise each day?
__________________________________________________
Weights
Joyce uses tinned tomatoes as hand weights to exercise her arms.

Arm exercise
Jenny finds carrying the clothes basket out each day is good arm exercise for her.

Walking
Jim walks to see his family around the corner each day. When Jim is well, he can easily walk the 15 minutes to and back from his family. When he can’t manage the walk, he knows it is time to go to the clinic.
Medicines

It is very important to take your medicines.

- Take your medicines every day.
- Most people with heart failure need more than one medicine and it is important to take them all.
- Don’t share or take other people’s medicines because they might not be right for you.
- Don’t run out of medicine.
- Make sure you have enough medicine to last if you are going away.
- Some medicines don’t mix well together.
- The amount of medicine you need for your heart may change. Medicines for heart failure are often started at a low dose and then the doctor will adjust them to suit you.
- Keep a list of your medicines and take it with you when you visit your health worker, nurse, doctor or hospital.
- Keep your medicine list up-to-date.
Medicines
Most people have no problems with their medicines but sometimes medicines can make you:

- dizzy or light-headed
- sick
- itchy or give you a rash
- cough.

Some medicines are bad for your heart when you have heart failure. Check with your health worker, nurse, doctor or pharmacist before you take:

- some pain or headache medicines
  - paracetamol pain medicines are recommended for pain in patients with heart failure
- some cough and cold medicines
- fizzy medicines (because they contain salt).

If you have a problem with your medicines, talk to your:

- health worker
- nurse
- doctor
- pharmacist.
Your heart failure medicines

Your doctor may give you a lot of different medicines to take for your heart failure.

Each medicine works in a different way to help your heart. Medicines for heart failure belong to the following groups.

**ACE inhibitor or angiotensin receptor blockers (ARB)**
ACE inhibitors and ARBs increase the blood flow to your heart, reduce your blood pressure and make it easier for your heart to pump.

The medicine I take in this group is: ________________

**Beta-blockers**
Beta-blockers help your heart to pump slower and stronger.

The medicine I take in this group is: ________________

**Diuretics**
Diuretics help take extra fluid out of the body.

The medicine I take in this group is: ________________

**Aldosterone blockers**
Aldosterone blockers help stop fluid building up and make it easier for your heart to pump.

The medicine I take in this group is: ________________

**Digoxin**
Digoxin makes your heart beat stronger and in a regular rhythm.

The medicine I take in this group is: ________________

**Other**
Other heart medicines I take: ______________________
________________________________________________

It is very important that you take all your heart failure medicines and follow the instructions carefully.
How you can make your heart feel better

Manage your fluid
- Know how much fluid or drink you can have each day.
- Don’t eat too much salt.

Limit alcohol
- Alcohol can cause more damage to your heart.
- If you drink alcohol, talk to your health worker, nurse or doctor about reducing your alcohol.

Keep healthy
- Weigh yourself every day.
- Ask your health worker, nurse or doctor if you need to Lose weight.
- Exercise daily.
- Eat fresh healthy food.
- Choose not to smoke.
- Look after your diabetes (sugar) and other health problems.

Immunisation
- Have a flu vaccine every year.
- Talk to your doctor, nurse or health worker about keeping your pneumococcal vaccine up-to-date.
Medicines

- Take your medicines.
- If you have a problem with your medicine, talk to your health worker, nurse, doctor or pharmacist.

Remember

- Visit the clinic regularly.
- Talk to your family or carer about your heart failure.

Important ‘Get Help Signs’ are:

- can’t lay down to sleep
- coughing at night
- being short of breath
- swelling, e.g. tight clothes, tight shoes, swollen stomach, puffy ankles and weight gain
- chest pain
- heart beating fast or racing (palpitations).

Coughing at night
Swollen stomach
Can’t lay down to sleep
My health record

<table>
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<th>Date</th>
<th>Weight (kg)</th>
<th>Waist (cm)</th>
<th>Blood pressure</th>
<th>HbA1c</th>
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More of these pages can be downloaded from the Heart Foundation website [www.heartfoundation.org.au](http://www.heartfoundation.org.au) or picked up at your clinic or health service.
# My clinic and doctor visits

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Where</th>
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<th>Transport</th>
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# My medicines

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<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Medicine name</th>
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<td>Bedtime</td>
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<td>When needed</td>
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| Date | 
|------------------|------------------|------------------|

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strength</th>
<th>How do I take it?</th>
<th>What is it for?</th>
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Living every day with my heart failure

My heart failure action plan

Get help **NOW** if you have:

- **severe** shortness of breath
- **chest pain** (angina)
- **tightness** in your chest, neck, jaw, throat, shoulders, arms or back
- **blackouts**.

And:

- **stop** and rest!
- take your **angina tablet or spray** under the tongue as directed
- **tell someone** what is happening
- **call Triple Zero (000)** (112 for mobiles) and ask for an ambulance
  - **Don’t hang up** – wait for advice!

Visit the clinic **TODAY** if you:

- need to sit up to sleep
- are not able to walk to ___________________________
- get swelling in ___________________________
- gain 2 kg in weight in two days
- feel dizzy
- cough a lot at night
- are feeling very sad, depressed or anxious
- have a racing or pounding heart
- are dizzy
- other ___________________________