

Focus on cardiac failure

Heart failure, sometimes known as congestive heart failure, occurs when your heart muscle doesn't pump blood as well as it should. Certain conditions, such as narrowed arteries in your heart (coronary artery disease) or high blood pressure, gradually leave your heart too weak or stiff to fill and pump efficiently.

Not all conditions that lead to heart failure can be reversed, but treatments can improve the signs and symptoms of heart failure and help you live longer. Lifestyle changes - such as exercising, reducing salt in your diet, reducing alcohol consumption, stopping smoking, managing stress and losing weight can improve your quality of life. One way to prevent heart failure is to control conditions that cause heart failure, such as coronary artery disease, high blood pressure, diabetes and obesity.

The signs and symptoms of cardiac failure

Heart failure signs and symptoms may include:

- Shortness of breath (dyspnoea) when you exert yourself or when you lie down
- Fatigue and weakness
- Swelling (oedema) in your legs, ankles and feet
- Rapid or irregular heartbeat
- Reduced ability to exercise
- Persistent cough or wheezing with white or pink blood-tinged phlegm
- Increased need to urinate at night
- Swelling of your abdomen (ascites)
- Sudden weight gain from fluid retention
- Lack of appetite and nausea
- Difficulty concentrating or decreased alertness
- Sudden, severe shortness of breath and coughing up pink, foamy mucus
- Chest pain if your heart failure is caused by a heart attack

When to see a doctor

See your doctor if you think you might be experiencing signs or symptoms of heart failure. Seek emergency treatment if you experience any of the following:

- Chest pain
- Fainting or severe weakness
- Rapid or irregular heartbeat associated with shortness of breath, chest pain or fainting
- Sudden, severe shortness of breath and coughing up pink, foamy mucus

Possible causes of cardiac failure

- **Coronary artery disease and heart attack:** Coronary artery disease is the most common form of heart disease and the most common cause of heart failure. Over time, arteries that supply blood to your heart muscle narrow from a build-up of fatty deposits - a process called atherosclerosis. The build-up of plaques can cause reduced blood flow to your heart. A heart attack occurs if plaques, formed by the fatty deposits in your arteries, rupture. This causes a blood clot to form, which may block blood flow to an area of the heart muscle, weakening the heart's pumping ability and often leaving permanent damage. If the damage is significant, it can lead to a weakened heart muscle.
- **High blood pressure (hypertension):** Blood pressure is the force of blood pumped by your heart through your arteries. If your blood pressure is high, your heart has to work harder than it should to circulate blood throughout your body. Over time, the heart muscle may become thicker to compensate for the extra work it must perform. Eventually, your heart muscle may become either too stiff or too weak to effectively pump blood.
- **Faulty heart valves:** The valves of your heart keep blood flowing in the proper direction through the heart. A damaged valve — due to a heart defect, coronary artery disease or heart infection — forces your heart to work harder to keep blood flowing as it should. Over time, this extra work can weaken your heart. Faulty heart valves, however, can be fixed or replaced if found in time.
- **Damage to the heart muscle (cardiomyopathy):** Heart muscle damage (cardiomyopathy) can have many causes, including several diseases, infections, alcohol abuse and the toxic effect of drugs, such as cocaine or some drugs used for chemotherapy.
- **Genetic factors** play an important role in several types of cardiomyopathy, such as dilated cardiomyopathy, hypertrophic cardiomyopathy, arrhythmogenic right ventricular cardiomyopathy, left ventricular noncompaction and restrictive cardiomyopathy.
- **Myocarditis** is an inflammation of the heart muscle. It is most commonly caused by a virus and can lead to left-sided heart failure.
- **Heart defects you are born with (congenital heart defects):** if your heart and its chambers or valves haven't formed correctly, the healthy parts of your heart have to work harder to pump blood through your heart, which, in turn, may lead to heart failure.
- **Abnormal heart rhythms (heart arrhythmias)** may cause your heart to beat too fast, which creates extra work for your heart. Over time, your heart may weaken, leading to heart failure. A slow heartbeat may prevent your heart from getting enough blood out to the body and may also lead to heart failure.
- **Other diseases:** Chronic diseases, such as diabetes, HIV, hyperthyroidism, hypothyroidism, or a build-up of iron (hemochromatosis) or protein (amyloidosis), may also contribute to heart failure.



Causes of acute heart failure include viruses that attack the heart muscle, severe infections, allergic reactions, blood clots in the lungs, the use of certain medications or any illness that affects the whole body.

How to register on the chronic programme

Once you have been diagnosed with cardiac failure, please ask your doctor to contact our Chronic Medicine Department on **0860 11 78 59** to register you on the Chronic Medicine Management Programme.

The chronic medicine consultant will liaise with your doctor regarding your treatment. Once the diagnostic criteria have been met and blood results have been submitted, the treatment will be approved.

We will let you know whether the treatment falls within the Momentum Medical Scheme formulary or if you will need to pay a co-payment.

Once you receive authorisation, you can take your prescription to your designated service provider to get your medication, and the claim can be submitted. A designated service provider (DSP) is a healthcare provider (doctor, pharmacist, hospital, etc) that is a medical scheme's first choice when its members require diagnosis, treatment or care for a Prescribed Minimum Benefit condition. If you voluntarily choose not to use the DSP and choose to rather use a different hospital, doctor or pharmacy, we may charge a co-payment.

The authorisation usually expires after 12 months. If there is no change in the medicine you need to take, your doctor or pharmacist can contact us on **0860 11 78 59** to renew the authorisation. The same process applies when there are any changes or additions to your authorisation.

For more on your chronic benefits and where to obtain chronic medicine and treatment, [click here](#).

Hospitalisation

If you need to be hospitalised for cardiac failure complications, log in to the **Momentum App**, contact us via the web chat facility on momentummedicalscheme.co.za, email us at preauthorisation@momentumhealth.co.za, send us a WhatsApp message or call us on **0860 11 78 59** to request pre-authorisation. We will allocate a case manager to follow up regarding your hospital stay.

Treatment plan

Once you are registered on the programme, you will have access to a treatment plan, which may include cover for tests, doctors' visits or other benefits considered medically necessary by your doctor – these will be reviewed by our clinical team to ensure appropriateness.



Compliance

You need to:

- obtain your chronic medication on a monthly basis,
- make sure that you take your medication according to the dosage and quantity prescribed by your doctor, and
- make sure that you do not miss a dose - this is not only important for compliance, but it can have serious implications for your health and wellbeing.

Please make sure your claims have the appropriate ICD-10 code

It is important for all claims to include the appropriate ICD-10 codes (diagnostic codes), so we can identify the claim correctly and pay it from the Chronic Benefit.

We may pay claims from your Day-to-day Benefits if:

- The claims are submitted without the relevant ICD-10 codes.
- You have exceeded the frequency limit on consultations or tests.
- The treatment is not clinically appropriate.

Contact us

You can contact us via the web chat facility on momentummedicalscheme.co.za, email us at member@momentumhealth.co.za, send us a WhatsApp message or call us on **0860 11 78 59**.

Glossary of terms

Designated service providers: Momentum Medical Scheme uses a network of designated service providers, such as Associated GPs and Specialists, as well as State facilities, depending on the circumstances, to diagnose and treat our members for the Prescribed Minimum Benefits.

A **formulary** is a list of medicines covered on your option, from which a doctor can prescribe the appropriate medication for your chronic condition.

ICD-10 is the diagnosis code.

Prescribed Minimum Benefits is a list of benefits for which all medical schemes in South Africa have to provide cover in terms of the Medical Schemes Act 131 of 1998 and the Regulations thereto. In order to access these benefits:

- Your medical condition must qualify for cover and be part of the defined list of Prescribed Minimum Benefit conditions.
- The treatment needed must match the treatments in the defined benefits.
- You must use the Scheme's Designated Service Providers. See the definition of Designated Service Providers on page 2 for more information.

If you voluntarily choose to use non-designated service providers, the Scheme will pay benefits up to the Momentum Medical Scheme Rate and relevant co-payments will apply. If you use non-designated



service providers in cases of an emergency medical condition, it is deemed involuntary and co-payments are therefore waived.

If your medical condition and treatment do not meet the above criteria to access these benefits, we will pay according to the benefits on your chosen benefit option.