



# angels grace

## HOSPICE

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## Meeting the Needs of Patients with Heart Failure

**H**ear failure affects more than 5 million Americans. Experts say it is one of the most common reasons why people are readmitted to the hospital. As heart failure patients lose the ability to care for themselves, they depend more and more on others, most often family members.

Heart failure patients may have a wide range of symptoms related to their illness, such as:

- Needing help with daily activities (bathing, toileting, dressing, eating, drinking, walking, etc.)
- Irregular heartbeat
- Shortness of breath
- Urinary incontinence
- Tiredness/weakness
- Dizziness
- Swelling
- Memory and cognitive loss
- Mood swings/irritability/anger

Caregivers of heart failure patients are often tasked with providing basic care that follows the patient's treatment plan. Many caregivers describe overwhelming physical, mental, and emotional stress from the workload.

Today, many home health and hospice care providers offer palliative support to these patients and their caregivers through home visits, telephone contact, and online tools, providing benefits such as:

- **Help navigating the healthcare system:** Providers can guide discussions about the disease, symptoms, life expectancy, and treatment plan. This helps caregivers know when to seek medical assistance to avoid unplanned emergencies and going to the hospital.
- **Tips to help meet dietary needs:** Information is available



to choose the right foods, measure how much you are drinking, and find low-salt options at the grocery store.

- **Tips to help track medications:** Caregivers can get advice on ordering drugs, keeping a schedule, and looking for side effects.
- **Suggestions for helpful apps:** Certain mobile applications can help monitor heart symptoms through tailored alerts and feedback.
- **Practical help for the caregiver:** Resources and advice are available to help with work demands, childcare, managing finances, filling out medical forms, and scheduling and transporting loved ones to follow-up visits.

If you are caring for someone living with heart failure, be sure to ask for help. Reach out to family, friends, healthcare experts, and even fellow caregivers through support groups. Keep the lines of communication open among all involved.

A caregiver's emotional wellbeing is important. Having the support to cope with hopelessness, sadness, and fear may help caregivers find the strength to face the many challenges of caring for a loved one.

## Tips to Help Older Adults Stay Heart Healthy

### 1. Make an Exercise Routine

Walking is an excellent option that most people can do. No equipment is needed, except for good shoes, and it's free. Walk around your neighborhood or go to the shopping mall during bad weather. Walk with a friend to motivate you to stick to a regular schedule.

Exercising 30 minutes, three to five times a week, is a great start for older adults. Be sure to check with your medical professional and listen to your body so you don't overdo it.

Many gyms have programs for seniors that fit their abilities and needs. Medicare covers many fitness programs nationwide, such as SilverSneakers®. Some communities may also have senior centers that offer free or reduced-cost exercise programs.

### 2. Eat a Healthy Diet

Make the right choices at the grocery store. Eat good fats, such as avocados and nuts. Add antioxidants to your diet, such as blueberries, to benefit overall heart health. Avoid foods that are high in carbohydrates, sugar, fat, and sodium. Focus on lean meats, fish, fruits, vegetables, olive oil, whole grains, and beans. Try to limit alcoholic drinks.

### 3. Get Enough Sleep

Lack of sleep can put you at a higher risk for cardiovascular disease (including high blood pressure and swelling) no matter your age or other health habits. If your breathing stops periodically during the night (sleep apnea), seek treatment. This problem is sometimes linked to irregular heartbeat.

One study found that those who slept fewer than six hours per night were about twice as likely to have a stroke or heart attack as people who slept six

to eight hours per night. Find ways to make sleep a priority.

### 4. Think Positively

Age can make it hard to perform daily tasks. And as we age, we may face many losses in our life. Loneliness or financial problems may be a constant worry. With this kind of stress, you are at greater risk of depression, which can also affect your heart health.

Stay connected to groups that make you feel good, such as church or family. Socialize, volunteer, find support networks, or visit a senior center. Some people may need professional counseling or medication. Some may benefit from the companionship and support of an in-home caregiver or pet. Finding ways to stay positive can help improve your heart health.

### Virtual Reality Can Expand Our Horizons

Virtual reality is a technology tool that makes you feel like you are somewhere else. A headset with goggles immerses you into a computer-generated world, with sights and sounds that completely detach you from your actual surroundings. Entertainment, games, travel, and education are among the most popular virtual reality activities. For those who are ill or bedbound, virtual reality can help reduce pain, stress, and loneliness, or teach new skills. Many hospices and home care agencies are starting to offer this high-tech service to improve quality of life for their patients.



Some people mistakenly think hospice care is just about dying...nothing could be further from the truth. Hospice helps patients and families focus on living. Angels Grace Hospice, LLC, brings comfort, dignity and peace to help people with a life-limiting illness live every moment of life to the fullest. We also provide support for family and friends.

We are licensed in the state of Illinois, Medicare Certified, Joint Commission Accredited and are locally owned and operated by experienced professionals dedicated to providing excellent end-of-life care for Will, Cook, DuPage, Kendall, Grundy, and Kane counties. Please contact us for more information.

### Angels Grace Hospice

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*To comfort always... this is our work*

