

COUNCIL PERSPECTIVES

# Lifestyle Modifications for Preventing and Treating Heart Failure



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**CME/MOC/ECME Objective for This Article:** Upon completion of this activity, the learner should be able to: 1) describe the impact of obesity on congestive heart failure and role of weight management; 2) discuss the American College of Cardiology Foundation/American Heart Association lifestyle guidelines associated with congestive heart failure; 3) recommend exercise to patients with congestive heart failure by discussing mortality benefits; 4) recognize which supplements show promise in treatment of congestive heart failure and which have not shown benefit; 5) consider the benefits of yoga and meditation in congestive heart failure; and 6) understand the negative impact of unintended weight loss.

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### ABSTRACT

Continued improvement in medical and device therapy for heart failure (HF) has led to better survival with this disease. Longer survival and increasing numbers of unhealthy lifestyle factors and behaviors leading to occurrence of HF at younger ages are both contributors to an increase in the overall prevalence of HF. Clinicians treating this complex disease tend to focus on pharmacological and device therapies, but often fail to capitalize on the significant opportunities to prevent or treat HF through lifestyle modification. Herein, the authors review the evidence behind weight management, exercise, nutrition, dietary composition, supplements, and mindfulness and their potential to influence the epidemiology, pathophysiology, etiology, and management of stage A HF. (J Am Coll Cardiol 2018;72:2391-405) © 2018 by the American College of Cardiology Foundation.

The prevalence of heart failure (HF) appears to be increasing in the United States (1). Other countries have also seen increases, particularly in patients <50 years of age (2). The onset of heart failure with preserved ejection fraction (HFpEF) is rising faster than heart failure with reduced ejection fraction (HFrEF) (3,4). The appearance of HF in younger patients has been attributed to a larger burden of risk factors, most notably obesity and its attendant comorbidities (2,5). Management of adverse lifestyles and related comorbidities is most important in stage A HF, when patients are at high risk of developing left ventricular (LV) dysfunction (Stage B HF) or symptomatic HF (stages C to D).

Poor dietary quality, including excess caloric intake and unhealthy food choices, low physical activity, and mental stress, are major, modifiable lifestyle factors that are likely contributing to the rapidly changing epidemiology of HF (6). Fortunately, the potentially favorable effects of lifestyle measures are similar in HFpEF and HFrEF. There is stronger evidence that HF can be prevented by favorable lifestyle choices, compared with treatment of existing HF. Nonetheless, it is likely that lifestyle therapies can be effective through the various stages of the disease.

Although favorable lifestyle changes are widely endorsed, the evidence supporting the utility of such

**The views expressed in this paper are from the American College of Cardiology's Nutrition and Lifestyle Committee as part of the Prevention of Cardiovascular Disease Council and do not necessarily reflect the position of the American College of Cardiology.**

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changes is limited. Further, there are multiple barriers to implementation of lifestyle changes in “real-world” clinical practice. The goal of this review is to familiarize health care practitioners with a broad overview of lifestyle measures, specifically as they relate to HF, so that they can engage in more informed, shared decision-making with their patients. In this paper, the evidence for lifestyle-based treatment approaches as preventive strategies for patients with stage A HF will be reviewed.

### PREVENTIVE STRATEGIES IN PATIENTS WITH STAGE A HF

Stage A HF, or “pre-HF,” as it is commonly referred to, is defined as those patients who are at high risk for developing symptomatic HF (7). The risk factors that define stage A HF include atherosclerotic heart disease, hypertension, and diabetes. Despite vigorous efforts to achieve aggressive blood pressure, glucose, and lipid goals using effective pharmacological approaches, the prevalence of HF continues to increase, suggesting that a focus on the upstream drivers (i.e., lifestyle factors) of the individual risk factors might produce incremental benefit.

### OBESITY AS A MODIFIABLE RISK FACTOR FOR HF DEVELOPMENT

Multiple large, observational studies have shown associations between obesity and incident HF (8-10). There is a dose-dependent relationship between increasing body mass index (BMI) and risk of HF, supporting a causal role (9,11). Conversely, long-term avoidance of obesity along with higher physical activity, modest alcohol intake, and not smoking have been independently associated with a markedly lower risk of HF (12,13). Keeping BMI <30.0 kg/m<sup>2</sup> over an average period of 21.5 years in older adults was associated with an adjusted hazard ratio of 0.70 for HF development (12).

Multiple mechanisms, including inflammation, myocardial injury (14), hypertension, impaired glucose homeostasis, dyslipidemia, sleep-disordered breathing, and LV hypertrophy (15-18), are hypothesized to contribute to the association between obesity and new-onset HF (Central Illustration) (18). Adjustment for obesity-related comorbidities (8) or fitness levels (9) attenuated or eliminated the association between obesity and HF in some studies.

Although obesity is widely recognized as a disease, prospective research on the management of

obesity has lagged behind that of other risk factors for HF. Most current strategies for management of obesity have limited effectiveness or lack of broad applicability. Loss of at least 10% body weight is likely necessary to favorably affect the subsequent risk of developing HF or reducing hospitalizations (19). Unfortunately, this magnitude of weight loss is infrequently realized or maintained with lifestyle changes alone (20). Large amounts of sustained weight loss achieved through bariatric surgery have been associated with reductions in both LV mass (21) and in new cases of HF (22,23). Although it is not a lifestyle intervention per se, the data from several large bariatric surgery registries provides important proof of concept that weight loss can be effective for prevention of HF (22,23). Weight management achieved through adoption of healthy eating and exercise habits likely has similar benefits for preventing incident HF. This, however, is difficult to prove, mostly due to the lack of resiliency of lifestyle interventions in the long-term (19,20,24).

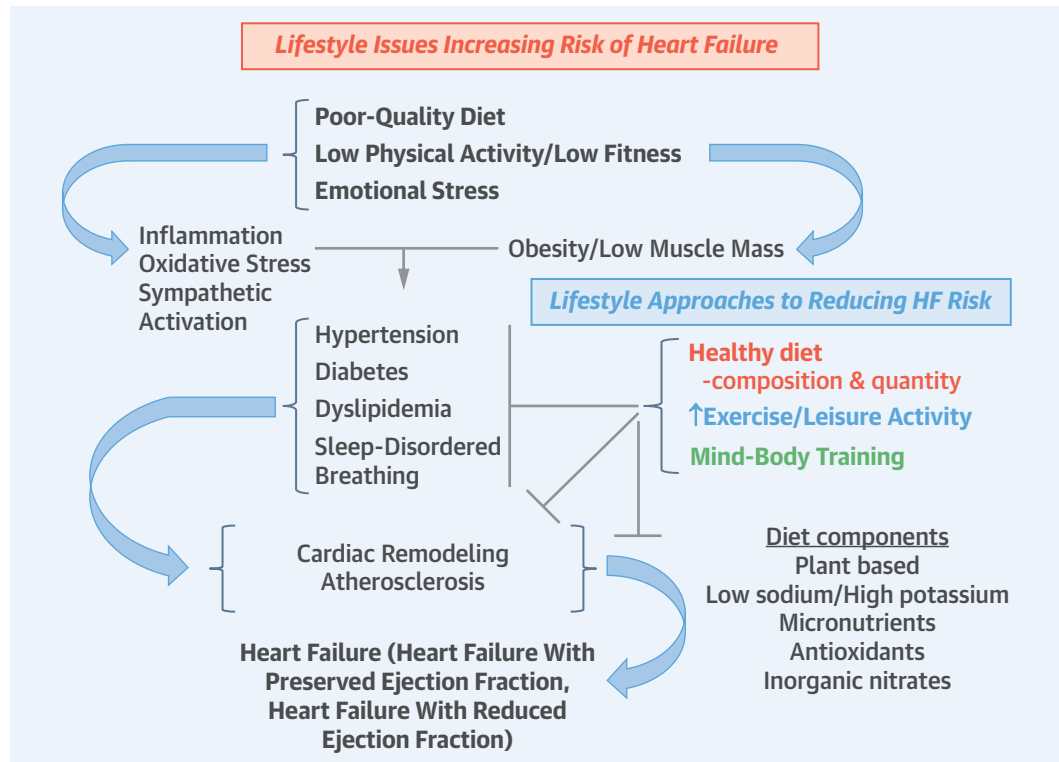
Weight management for treatment of existing HF is controversial due to the presence of an “obesity paradox” (25) in which overweight and/or obesity appears to be a risk factor for the development of HF, but is paradoxically associated with better survival in those with stage C to D HF. Conversely, low body weight and unintentional weight loss are known harbingers of poor prognosis in HF. Whether intentional weight loss carries any adverse effects in patients with HF is uncertain. Several retrospective studies suggest that severely obese patients with higher stages of HF<sub>rEF</sub> have increases in left ventricular ejection fraction (LVEF) (26) and lower rates of HF-related hospitalizations (27) following bariatric surgery. A single randomized controlled trial (RCT) of exercise and hypocaloric diet in patients with HF<sub>pEF</sub> showed beneficial effects of diet-induced weight loss on exercise capacity (28), but the trial was not powered for other clinical endpoints.

### BOTTOM LINE: OBESITY MANAGEMENT FOR HF PREVENTION AND TREATMENT

**MAINTENANCE OF NORMAL BODY WEIGHT THROUGHOUT ADULT LIFE IS STRONGLY PROTECTIVE AGAINST HF.** Weight management achieved through bariatric surgery has relatively large, favorable effects in protection against progression in stage A HF and

### ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

- BMI** = body mass index
- CHD** = coronary heart disease
- CoQ10** = coenzyme Q10
- CRF** = cardiorespiratory fitness
- ET** = exercise training
- HF** = heart failure
- HF<sub>pEF</sub>** = heart failure with preserved ejection fraction
- HF<sub>rEF</sub>** = heart failure with reduced ejection fraction
- TM** = transcendental meditation

**CENTRAL ILLUSTRATION** Overview of Lifestyle Factors That May Contribute to the Risk of Heart Failure and Opportunities for Therapeutic Interventions

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Poor diet quality, low physical activity, and emotional stress can cause inflammation, oxidative stress, and sympathetic activation, and contribute to obesity (top curved arrows). Together, these factors can trigger or exacerbate hypertension, diabetes, dyslipidemia, and sleep-disordered breathing (middle curved arrows), which can lead to left ventricular (LV) remodeling, atherosclerosis, and ultimately, heart failure (bottom curved arrows). Healthy diet, exercise, and mind-body training can work against all of these processes (T lines).

also appears to have some benefit in stage C to D HF, although this is much less firmly established. Unfortunately, long-term success with lifestyle changes directed at weight management in patients with all stages of HF is challenging.

#### DIETARY COMPOSITION IN HF PREVENTION

Dietary composition may affect HF risk through mechanisms other than effects on weight. Only 1.5% of the U.S. population follows all of the dietary recommendations of the American Heart Association (AHA) (1). Diets containing greater amounts of plant-based foods including fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds, and legumes and fewer animal-derived foods and processed foods appear to be beneficial for both atherosclerosis and HF prevention (29-34) (Table 1). In the Physician's Health Study, men who consumed more fruits and vegetables had a lower

risk of HF (35). Similar results were obtained in populations from Finland (36), Sweden (37), and the United Kingdom (38). Conversely, diets higher in phosphatidyl choline (contained in red meat, cheese, and eggs) appear to promote an increase in the intestinal metabolite trimethylamine-N-oxide, a risk factor for myocardial infarction, stroke, HF, and death (39,40).

In prospective studies and RCTs, higher fruit and vegetable intake have consistently been linked to improved cardiovascular outcomes (41-43). Better adherence to the Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) diet, which is low in saturated fat and high in fruits and vegetables, whole grains, beans, and legumes, was associated with lower blood pressures and reduced incidence of HF in men and women in 2 large prospective Swedish cohorts (44) and with decreased mortality among women with HF (45). Consumption of a DASH diet was associated

**TABLE 1 Benefits of a Plant-Based Diet on Risk Factors for Heart Failure**

Risk Factor	Benefit
Blood pressure	Diets rich in plant-based foods, particularly vegetarian and vegan diets, reduce systolic and diastolic blood pressure, presumably due, in part, to their high potassium content and their tendency to reduce blood viscosity and improve endothelial function (33,157,158). The DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) study, which was in large part inspired by the blood pressure-lowering effect of vegetarian diets, was successful in lowering blood pressure (159), and was associated with favorable changes in diastolic and arterial function among individuals with heart failure with preserved ejection fraction (47).
Body weight	Diets rich in plant-based foods are consistently associated with reduced body weight in observational studies and clinical trials, apparently due to their low energy density and tendency to increase postprandial energy expenditure. Those following entirely plant-based (vegan) diets have demonstrably healthier body weights, on average, compared with other groups (31,42,160).
Lipid control	Elevated LDL cholesterol (161) concentrations and atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease (162) contribute to endothelial dysfunction, which is associated with systolic and diastolic heart failure (163). Because most plants are extremely low in saturated fat and devoid of cholesterol, and many are rich in soluble fiber or other lipid-lowering ingredients, plant-based diets improve plasma lipid concentrations (32). Vegetarian diets may also render LDL cholesterol more resistant to oxidation (164).
Glycemic control	Diabetes and insulin resistance are associated with altered energy metabolism, adverse cardiac remodeling, and incident heart failure (165,166). Vegan diets are associated with a particularly low prevalence of type 2 diabetes (167) and improve glucose metabolism in individuals with diabetes (42). Moreover, a Mediterranean diet versus control has been associated with lower incident diabetes (168).
Inflammation	Incident heart failure is associated with inflammation (169). Diets rich in plant-based foods may reduce inflammation (170-172) adding a measure of protection against heart failure (35-38). In contrast, meats, particularly processed red meat, may increase inflammation, as shown by increasing serum levels of C-reactive protein (173,174). Furthermore, a Mediterranean diet vs. control is associated with reduced serum markers of inflammation (175). MMPs participate in inflammation: higher levels are associated with increased atherosclerosis and heart failure risk (176,177). A vegetarian diet is associated with decreased levels of MMP compared with an omnivorous diet, and hence may be protective (178).
Reactive oxygen species	Reactive oxygen species may induce interstitial fibrosis, myocyte hypertrophy, and aortic stiffness and contribute to the development of heart failure (179,180). Plant-based diets, with their high antioxidant content, may reduce oxidative stress and provide greater amounts of antioxidants than do non-plant-based foods (70). Accordingly, both a Mediterranean diet and a DASH diet were associated with greater serum antioxidant capacity vs. control (181,182). Furthermore, a vegetarian diet may be protective as it is associated with lower serum myeloperoxidase levels, a promoter of reactive oxygen species formation, vs. an omnivorous diet (178,183).
TMAO	TMAO is produced by intestinal bacteria as a byproduct of choline and L-carnitine metabolism (184). Increased TMAO levels are associated with vascular inflammation (185), platelet reactivity, decreased reverse cholesterol transport (184), cardiovascular disease (184,185), and heart failure severity (186,187). Plant-based diets reduce TMAO formation through favorable effects on gut microbiota, whereas animal-based foods may raise TMAO levels (184,188).

LDL = low-density lipoprotein; MMP = metalloproteinase; TMAO = trimethylamine N-oxide.

with improved indexes of LV function in a multi-ethnic population without overt cardiovascular disease (46) and was associated with favorable changes in diastolic and arterial function among individuals with HFpEF (47). In a population cohort of 32,921 women, greater adherence to a Mediterranean style diet, which emphasizes vegetables, fruits, nuts, whole grains, legumes, fish, fermented dairy, mono-unsaturated fat, and low amounts of red meat, was also associated with a lower HF risk (48) and lower N-terminal pro-brain natriuretic peptide level (49). However, not all studies of a Mediterranean diet found a clear association. Although a pre-specified secondary analysis of the PREDIMED (Primary Prevention of Cardiovascular Disease with a Mediterranean Diet Study) was strongly in favor of Mediterranean diet in patients with HFpEF, this diet did not result in a lower HF incidence. Importantly, this analysis was underpowered to prove this hypothesis, so the question of whether a Mediterranean style diet can prevent HF remains open (50). In a recent study looking at diet quality (DASH-style diet, Mediterranean diet, and the Alternate Healthy Index), a 20% increase in diet quality scores was associated with an 8% to 17% decrease of death from any cause (51).

**BOTTOM LINE: DIETARY APPROACHES TO HF PREVENTION**

Population-based samples and limited data from RCTs provide modest support for dietary approaches to reduce HF. Healthful eating patterns, particularly those that are based more on consumption of foods derived from plants, such as the Mediterranean, whole grain, plant-based diet and DASH diets, may offer some protection against HF development.

**SODIUM RESTRICTION**

Population-based cohort studies have demonstrated an association between higher salt intake and an increased incidence of HF (52). In a cohort of overweight and obese participants, increased dietary sodium intake was associated with increased relative risk for incident HF by 26% (52). Adherence to the DASH diet, which advocates salt reduction, was inversely proportional to HF incidence (44). Clinical trials and meta-analyses provide strong scientific support for salt restriction to prevent hypertension (44,53,54), stroke, and cardiovascular disease (53,55,56). However, prospective studies examining whether sodium restriction specifically reduces the

incidence of HF are lacking. If it is to be advocated, the amount of sodium restriction that is optimal for patients who are at high risk for cardiovascular disease or HF is uncertain. The AHA recommends limiting dietary sodium intake to <1,500 mg/day (53). Because of the data linking sodium intake with blood pressure, these recommendations for sodium appear to be applicable to patients with stage A and B HF, many of whom have hypertension (7).

In patients with known HF, the 2010 Heart Failure Society of America guidelines recommend dietary sodium restriction to 2 to 3 g daily (57). Although widely accepted, it should however be noted that the data supporting these recommendations are limited, inconsistent, and controversial (58-60). The relationship between sodium intake and outcomes may be nonlinear, as suggested by recent data on salt consumption and hypertension (61). Some studies suggest a worsening neurohormonal profile with sodium restriction in patients with HF (62-64), and observational studies suggested that sodium restriction might be associated with increased risk of death or HF hospitalization (65). Sodium restriction may be most appropriate for patients in New York Heart Association (NYHA) functional class III and IV (66). In the 2013 AHA/American College of Cardiology Foundation (ACCF) guidelines for the management of HF, sodium restriction is considered reasonable (Class IIa recommendation) for patients with symptomatic HF to reduce congestive symptoms, but the guideline also emphasized that there is lack of evidence for a stronger recommendation (7).

Despite guideline recommendations, patient adherence to dietary sodium restriction is poor. In an analysis of survey data from patients with self-reported HF, the mean sodium intake was 2,719 mg/day, with only 34% consuming <2,000 mg/day (67). There is a strong need for well-designed, prospective trials on the effects of sodium restriction in HF patients.

#### **BOTTOM LINE: SODIUM RESTRICTION**

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Strong evidence is available to support restriction of salt/sodium intake to prevent hypertension, stroke, and cardiovascular disease. Given the strong link between hypertension and HF, it is reasonable to recommend limitation of sodium intake in stage A HF. The optimal amount of dietary sodium is uncertain, although most professional societies advocate for 1,500 to 2,400 mg (68). Although widely advocated, the role of sodium restriction in established HF is less definitive, and ongoing studies are addressing this controversy.

#### **ANTIOXIDANTS (DIETARY AND SUPPLEMENTAL) AND OTHER NUTRITION SUPPLEMENTS**

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Among 33,713 women from the Swedish Mammography Cohort, the total antioxidant capacity of participants' diets was estimated from a food questionnaire and intake of antioxidants was inversely associated with the development of HF over 11.3 years of follow-up (69). Antioxidants such as vitamin C, vitamin E, beta-carotene, lycopene, lutein, zeaxanthin, and anthocyanins are found in a number of different plant-based foods (70). Deficiencies of zinc (71) and selenium (72) have been reported in patients with HF. Despite the associations, the use of antioxidant supplements has not been effective in prevention of coronary heart disease (CHD) and has not been well studied for HF.

#### **COENZYME Q10**

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Coenzyme Q10 (CoQ10) is hypothesized to reduce harmful effects of reactive oxygen species that are increased in patients with HF and thus function as an antioxidant. CoQ10 is present in food, including red meat, plants, and fish, but the quantities are thought to be insufficient to affect HF incidence or progression. Reduced myocardial tissue content of CoQ10 has been demonstrated in patients with HF. CoQ10 deficiency correlates with the severity of HF symptoms and the degree of LV dysfunction (73,74), and is associated with mortality in HF (75). Published meta-analyses of RCTs with CoQ10 in HF have mostly indicated a positive effect on LVEF, with or without improvement of NYHA functional class (76,77). Most of these studies were small and heterogeneous, and lacked information on clinically relevant major endpoints such as mortality (76,78). In 2 systematic reviews, there was either a nonsignificant trend toward reduced mortality (79) or no effect on total mortality from CoQ10 supplementation (78). The recently published Q-SYMBIO RCT reported that in 420 patients with NYHA functional class III or IV HF, CoQ10 supplementation over 2 years was associated with a significantly lower incidence of major adverse cardiovascular events, cardiovascular death, urgent cardiac transplantation, mechanical circulatory support, total mortality, cardiovascular mortality, HF hospitalizations, and improvement in NYHA functional class (80). The evidence for CoQ10 supplementation is stronger than that for other supplements, and it is one of the few dietary therapies that has been directly studied in stage C to D HF. Nonetheless, the level of evidence for CoQ10



supplementation is still only moderate due to the relatively small size of the study.

### L-CARNITINE AND TAURINE

L-carnitine is an amino acid derivative that plays a critical role in fatty acid transport into the mitochondria. Genetic causes of carnitine deficiency are associated with cardiomyopathy, and reduced L-carnitine content has been documented in the failing heart (81). Small studies have shown benefits of L-carnitine dietary supplements on cardiac remodeling after myocardial infarction (82), increases in exercise capacity (83), increases in peak oxygen consumption (VO<sub>2</sub>), improvement in LVEF, cardiac remodeling (84), and improved clinical outcomes in patients with HF (85). Doses of L-carnitine in the studies ranged from 1.5 to 6 g/day, and follow-up periods lasted from 7 days to 3 years. Taurine, a related amino acid, has also been studied as a cardioprotective dietary supplement (86). Taurine administered orally (3 g/day) for 6 weeks, compared with CoQ10 (30 g/day), in a double-blind trial of 17 patients with HF and ejection fraction <50% resulted in significant improvements in LV systolic function, whereas no effects were observed for CoQ10 (87). There is little to no evidence for the use of these supplements in the prevention of HF (Stage A).

### THIAMINE (VITAMIN B1) AND OTHER B VITAMINS

B vitamins are water-soluble, and tissue levels are dependent on intake. Severe thiamine deficiency, or beriberi, can result in cardiomyopathy and HF. Thiamine deficiency is rare in areas with access to vitamin-enriched foods or whole grains. Prolonged and large doses of diuretic use can be associated with thiamine deficiency, especially in patients hospitalized with HF (88). Doses of 1.5 mg/day of oral thiamine may restore normal levels. Thiamine repletion has been associated with improvement in LV function in 1 study (89), but other studies show mixed results (90,91). High dietary intakes of folate and vitamin B6 have been associated with reduced risk of mortality from stroke, CHD, and HF in some cohorts (92), but the data are conflicting (93). Studies on the effects of B-vitamin supplementation in patients with HF or at risk for HF (Stage A) are currently lacking, although routine supplementation has not been found to be beneficial in other populations (94).

### VITAMIN D, CALCIUM

Low vitamin D levels have been reported in HF patients (95), correlate with severity of HF (96), and

**TABLE 2** Vegetables According to Nitrate Concentration

Nitrate Content (mg/100 g) of Fresh Food	Vegetables
Very low, <20 mg	Asparagus, garlic, onion, green bean, pepper, potato, sweet potato, tomato, and watermelon
Low, 20- <50 mg	Broccoli, carrot, cauliflower, and chicory
Regular, 50- <100 mg	Cabbage, turnip, and dill
High, 100- <250 mg	Endive, sweet leaf, parsley, and leek
Very high, >250 mg	Celery, chard, lettuce, beetroot, spinach, arugula, and watercress

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have been hypothesized to contribute to cardiac dysfunction through both calcium-dependent and -independent processes (81). Small studies of vitamin D supplementation in patients with HF and vitamin D deficiency have reported improvement in LVEF in the elderly (97), decreases in aldosterone levels (98), and improvement in NYHA functional class and exercise capacity (98,99). Vitamin D plus calcium supplementation did not significantly reduce the incidence of HF in the overall cohort of 35,983 postmenopausal women enrolled in the Women's Health Initiative randomized trial (100). There is little to no evidence for these supplements in the prevention of HF (Stage A).

### DIETARY APPROACHES TO INCREASING NITRIC OXIDE AVAILABILITY

HF is associated with reduced nitric oxide bioavailability, which may contribute to endothelial dysfunction (101,102). Once viewed as toxic and potentially carcinogenic, inorganic nitrates are now regarded as potentially beneficial bioactive molecules with promising therapeutic effects on vascular health (103). Green leafy vegetables, such as arugula, lettuce, beet greens, and spinach, are the major sources of dietary nitrate (Table 2) (104). The Mediterranean diet, known for its high concentration of vegetables, contains an estimated 400 to 550 g of nitrate versus 77 g in the typical Western diet (105,106). Similarly, the high nitrate content of the fruit and vegetable-rich DASH diet has been proposed as 1 potential mechanism through which this dietary pattern helps to lower blood pressure (101,104).

Intake of dietary inorganic nitrate has been associated with improved exercise capacity, reduced blood pressure and inflammation, and increased browning of adipose tissue (103,107-111). In a double-blind crossover study, 13 patients with LVEF ≤40% received nitrate-rich or -depleted beetroot juice for

9 days. Active treatment had no significant effects on exercise time, central hemodynamics, resting or exercising blood pressure, pulmonary oxygen uptake kinetics, skeletal muscle oxygenation, or blood lactate (112). In 2 small studies of 17 and 20 subjects with HFpEF, doses of nitrate-rich beetroot juice were found to significantly increase exercise capacity and were both feasible and safe (108,109). Recent results from the INDIE (Inorganic Nitrite Delivery to Improve Exercise Capacity in Heart Failure With Preserved Ejection Fraction) trial, however, did not show any beneficial effects on exercise tolerance in patients with HFpEF (113). There is little to no evidence for these supplements in the prevention of HF (Stage A).

#### **BOTTOM LINE: SUPPLEMENTS FOR STAGE A AND MORE ADVANCED HF**

Higher dietary antioxidant content may be protective, although use of antioxidant supplements has not been found to be effective in CHD and data in HF are lacking. The 2013 ACCF/AHA guidelines for the management of HF (7) advise against the use of supplements in patients with current or prior symptoms of HF (Level of Evidence: B). Similarly, the 2010 HFSA guidelines advise against the use of nutraceutical agents for relief of symptomatic HF (57). Coenzyme Q10 has the most promising data for use in HF, but firm recommendations regarding use are limited by small trial size.

#### **CARDIORESPIRATORY FITNESS**

Physical inactivity and poor cardiorespiratory fitness (CRF) are independent and modifiable risks for development of HF (9,114). The mechanisms underlying the protective effects of exercise are probably multifactorial (115). A strong dose-dependent inverse risk has been shown to exist between level of physical activity and risk of incident HF. Improvement in CRF among middle-age subjects with low fitness (<8 metabolic equivalents) was associated with a lower risk of HF in older age, independent of BMI (116). Similarly, increased physical activity was associated with a lower risk of HF (117), whereas a slower decline in CRF was associated with favorable systolic and diastolic parameters independent of other risk factors (118). An inverse dose-response relationship was reported between moderate to vigorous physical activity and incident HF hospitalization. This was true among both black men and women with normal ejection fractions (119). There may, however, be upper limits to the protective dose of exercise (120). The dose-dependent inverse relationship between

physical activity and incident HF likely exists in both HFrEF and HFpEF, although direct comparisons are lacking. A recent study looked at 61 healthy, sedentary men and placed them on a 2-year intensive supervised exercise program. A total of 53 people completed the study, and adherence to the exercise regimen was 88%. After 2 years, maximal oxygen uptake increased by 18%, and cardiac stiffness reduced (as measured by 3D echocardiography and right heart catheterization). These changes suggest that improved physical activity could have a potential role in reducing the risk of HFpEF (121). Current guidelines recommend 30 min of walking for at least 5 days/week or 2 h and 30 min/week of moderate intensity, 1 h and 15 min (75 min)/week of vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity, or an equivalent combination of moderate- and vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity for optimal cardiovascular health (122).

Exercise training (ET) has been proven to be efficacious as a treatment for HF of both phenotypes. In HFrEF, the HF-ACTION (Efficacy and Safety of Exercise Training in Patients With Chronic Heart Failure) trial was a prospective RCT of ET in 2,231 HFrEF patients with NYHA functional class II to IV symptoms. Patients were randomized to usual care plus aerobic ET, consisting of 36 supervised sessions followed by home-based training, or usual care alone. Exercise did not significantly affect all-cause mortality or all-cause hospitalization; however, there was a reduction in mortality seen after adjustment for covariates. Men and women undergoing ET had equal improvement of peak  $\text{VO}_2$  at 3 months (123). In sub-analysis, ET in women with HF was associated with a larger reduction in rate of the combined endpoint of all-cause mortality and hospital stay than in men (124). No interaction was found between race and ET with respect to outcomes (125). The study highlighted the challenges of long-term adherence to ET prescription with only a small number of patients maintaining adherence to training after the initial supervised sessions. Based on findings from the HF-ACTION trial, cardiac rehabilitation or exercise therapy is now covered by the Center for Medicare or Medicaid and strongly recommended by the ACC/AHA guidelines in HFrEF patients (7).

In HFpEF, ET has been proven to be efficacious for improving peak  $\text{VO}_2$  (126-128). However, Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services coverage for cardiac rehabilitation in HFpEF has been limited by the smaller sizes of the studies and lack of long-term outcomes in this HF phenotype. Recently, a small study suggested that HFpEF patients had greater



**TABLE 3 Exercise Prescription: Essential Components**

Factor	Considerations
Intensity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• % heart rate reserve: 70%</li> <li>• Borg RPE: &gt;14</li> <li>• Resistance training: elastic bands, weights</li> </ul>
Duration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 30 min minimum</li> <li>• Shorter duration for frail</li> <li>• Additional warm-up or cool down phase</li> </ul>
Frequency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Daily to 5 days a week</li> </ul>
Progression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advance to HR/Borg RPE targets</li> </ul>
Maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of behavioral and nontraditional strategies</li> </ul>

Modified with permission from Piña IL. Cardiac rehabilitation in heart failure: a brief review and recommendations. *Curr Cardiol Rep* 2010;12:223-9.  
 RPE = rate of perceived exertion.

peak VO<sub>2</sub> improvement in response to 16-week supervised moderate-intensity endurance training compared with those with HFrEF (129).

**EXERCISE PRESCRIPTION IN HF**

Based on current evidence, exercise should be prescribed in both HF phenotypes. A construct on exercise prescription considerations is shown in Table 3. Emphasis should be made on the intensity and components of exercise, and recommendations should include aerobic and resistance training. It is known that higher exercise intensity compared with recommended guidelines leads to a lower risk of incident HF compared with low exercise intensities (130). Consideration should be made to include inspiratory muscle training (to enhance functional capacity) and strength training (to reduce sarcopenia) especially in certain high-risk groups such as elderly, frail HF patients with multiple comorbidities and activity limiting symptoms. Novel approaches such as telemedicine, exergaming systems, and behavioral coaches may increase adherence (131). As comprehensive HF managements continue to gain acceptance, such programs and community-based approaches should be harnessed to reinforce maintenance of ET in these patients who may find it difficult to adhere to office-based programs.

**BOTTOM LINE: PHYSICAL ACTIVITY TO PREVENT AND TREAT HF**

Increased CRF is strongly associated with decreased incident HF and has benefit in both HFrEF and HFpEF. ET has functional benefits in HFpEF and HFrEF and survival benefits in HFrEF.

**MIND/BODY INTERVENTIONS**

Mind and body intervention is described as activities that focus on the interplay among social, spiritual,

**TABLE 4 Mind-Body Techniques and Associated Improvements in Randomized Controlled Trials**

MBI Practice	Improved Variables
Tai chi	Depression Quality of life Exercise tolerance
Yoga	Exercise capacity Peak VO <sub>2</sub>
Relaxation response training	Symptoms Quality of life
Meditation	6-min walk Depression Hospitalizations
Acupuncture	6-min walk test Quality of life
Biofeedback	Quality of life
Reflexology	Depression 6-min walk test

VO<sub>2</sub> = peak oxygen consumption.

mental, and behavioral factors that affect overall health (Table 4) (132,133).

Yoga is an ancient practice that combines body movements, respiration, and mind control (134). It is postulated that the beneficial effects of yoga on the cardiovascular system are mediated via increased vagal tone, enhanced parasympathetic, and reduced sympathetic activity (135). Different types of yoga have been associated with improvements in anginal symptoms (136) and exercise capacity (136,137), reduction in inflammation (137) and atherosclerosis (138), and improvement in multiple additional cardiovascular risk factors (139). There have been 2 main studies looking at yoga in known HF. They included both sexes and NYHA functional classes I to III. One of the studies was limited to patients with HFrEF, and the other study included both HFrEF and HFpEF. Both studies utilized a warm-up that included breathing exercises, a 40-min session of standing or seated postures, and 15 to 20 min of relaxation or recovery. Both studies showed an improvement in VO<sub>2</sub> in the yoga intervention group and both had an improvement in quality-of-life scores. In meta-analysis, the change in VO<sub>2</sub> was 22% in the intervention group. Considering that any improvement in peak VO<sub>2</sub> of ≥10% is considered significant, this change appears to be compelling. The quality-of-life indexes also improved by 24% in the yoga group. This is likely an important marker in a population that has a high incidence of depression (140). Yoga should be considered as an option for cardiac rehabilitation of HF patients (140,141).

Transcendental meditation (TM) is chant-based meditation that has also been shown to have cardiovascular benefits and potential benefits in all stages

**TABLE 5 Transmitting Measures into Clinical Practice**

Practice Measure	Level of Evidence	Incorporating Into Practice
Whole grain, plant-based diets	Moderate benefit in stage A HF Potential Benefit in stages B-D HF	"Starting the Conversation Survey" is a good start to asking about daily intake. Websites: Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine and Forks Over Knives are available with recipes and educational materials for patients
Sodium restriction	Strong for stage A HF Moderate for stages B-D HF	Focusing on avoidance of processed foods and restaurant foods; 1 teaspoon of salt is 2,000 mg of sodium; nutrition label education Website: American Heart Association regarding sodium and salt
Weight loss	Strong for bariatric surgery for stage A HF in severely obese patients. Moderate for improving symptoms or reducing hospitalizations in existing HF, stages B-D	Focus on diet education in terms of removing sugar-sweetened beverages, processed foods highlighting "instant" meals; education on nutrition labeling; establish a nutritionist in clinic
Supplements 1. Coenzyme q10 2. Taurine and carnitine 3. B vitamins 4. Vitamin D and calcium	Evidence on supplements is conflicting and weak, although several micronutrient deficiencies have been associated with HF	Coenzyme Q10 has slightly more compelling evidence for a role in stages B-D HF; dosing in Q-SYMBIO trial was 100 mg 3 times daily
Exercise: low, moderate, high	Strong in all stages of HF	In HF patients, starting with stationary bicycle, low level, no incline treadmill, pool walking is a good start
Mind-body 1. Yoga 2. Meditation 3. Tai chi	1. Weak in all stages of HF 2. Weak in all stages of HF 3. Moderate in stages B-D HF, but with low risk profile	1. Chair yoga, wall squats are reasonable first steps; community yoga programs are widely available 2. Transcendental meditation is widely available but can be expensive. Apps such as Headspace and Calm are reasonable to advocate 3. Tai-chi classes are widely available but will typically require a higher-functioning HF patient

of HF. An early study showed that during TM, practitioners experienced a decrease in heart rate and also lowered their oxygen consumption (142). Since then, TM has been associated with reduced mortality (143) and improvements in blood pressure (144) and insulin resistance (145). A pooled analysis of 202 subjects (mean age 72 years) with high blood pressure from 2 separate studies and with a mean follow-up of 7.6 years found that compared with the combined control subjects, TM and other behavioral interventions were associated with a 23% relative risk reduction in all-cause mortality and a 30% relative reduction in cardiovascular mortality (143). In a study of 23 African-American patients with EF <40%, the TM group showed significant improvement in 6-min walk, depression scores, and quality-of-life measures compared with patients who received standard health education at 6 months. In addition, the TM group had fewer rehospitalizations during the 6-month follow-up period (146). In another study, 19 HF patients were randomized to either usual care or usual care plus weekly meetings including meditation. At the end of 12 weeks, the meditation group showed improved measures of exercise performance, improved quality-of-life scores, and reduction in plasma norepinephrine (147). The Support, Education, and Research in Chronic Heart Failure study was an 8-week mindfulness-based psychoeducational intervention among patients with HF. Treatment reduced anxiety and depression compared with control subjects. Although this effect was attenuated

at 1 year, those in the treatment arm had better HF symptom control at 12 months. There was no effect on death or hospitalization at 1 year (148). In response to this and other information, the AHA advocates TM as part of secondary prevention of CHD (149). Most of the studies on yoga and TM were of low quality and had a high risk of bias, thereby limiting the strength of conclusions that can be drawn from them (150). However, yoga classes are widely available in the community and are generally low risk.

**TAI CHI.** Tai-chi exercise may benefit patients in all stages of HF through improvements in their quality of life and capacity to exercise. In 1 study, 100 patients with systolic HF were randomized to either a tai-chi intervention for 60 min, twice per week for 4 to 16 weeks, or an education-only control. Tai chi reduced depressive scores, improved quality of life and increased exercise tolerance (151,152). The Compassionate Approach to Lifestyle and Mind-Body Skills for Patients with CHF enrolled patients who were hospitalized within the previous 12 months. Patients had 8 weekly visits focusing on education about medications, diet, exercise, sleep, and stress management and training in mind-body. In this pilot study, improvements were observed in depression, fatigue, and satisfaction with life (153). Recently, researchers randomized 16 patients with HFpEF to 12 weeks of tai chi or aerobic exercise and found improvements in the 6-min walk and depression scores with tai chi versus exercise (154).

## BOTTOM LINE: MINDFULNESS APPROACHES FOR HF TREATMENT

In small studies, yoga and meditation have shown benefit in reduction of blood pressure and reduced cardiovascular mortality. They have also shown symptomatic benefit in more advanced HF in small studies. Although high-quality evidence is limited or absent, there is almost no harm in recommending these practices for stage A to D HF. Further research into these approaches is ongoing.

## FUTURE TECHNOLOGICAL APPROACHES TO LIFESTYLE CHANGE

Given the difficulties in maintaining healthy lifestyle changes, there has been a great deal of interest in leveraging the widespread use of new technologies that may easily provide reminders, trackers (dietary intake and activity), and motivational tools to people attempting to adopt healthy habits (155,156). Evidence is currently limited in this arena.

## PUTTING LIFESTYLE MEASURES INTO CLINICAL PRACTICE

HF incidence continues to rise despite overall improvements in HF mortality. Lifestyle factors such as poor diet, obesity, lack of physical activity, and increased levels of emotional stress have likely contributed to the changing epidemiology of HF

(onset at younger ages, higher proportion of HFpEF). There are many opportunities to institute lifestyle changes that have the potential to decrease the risk of developing HF, which is particularly important for the emerging HFpEF phenotype that lacks beneficial medical or device therapies. A summary of the benefits of all of the lifestyle interventions is shown in **Table 5**. Many of these same approaches have potential utility in the management of more advanced HF. In summary, achieving and maintaining high levels of fitness (9,13,120) and maintenance of normal body weight (9,13,116) have the most compelling benefits for prevention, while ET has the strongest evidence for patients with established HF (123). Stress reduction through mind/body interventions has many health benefits, and the long-term efficacy on HF is not yet clearly defined. Supplements of all sorts have limited data or evidence for benefit in HF risk reduction at this time. Patients should be encouraged to enroll in cardiac rehabilitation programs and/or engage in home exercise options.

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**KEY WORDS** coenzyme Q10, congestive heart failure, diet, diuretics, exercise, lifestyle, meditation, nitrates, nutrition, obesity, risk modification, sodium, supplements, weight management, yoga

