

# THE HEART SUPPORT NEWSLETTER



Irish Heart  
Foundation

from the Irish Heart Foundation and it's members

November 2020

## Welcome

Welcome to the first issue of the **heart support newsletter**, an initiative created by the Irish Heart Foundation and it's members for heart failure patients living all across Ireland.

2020 has been a challenging year for everyone, including heart patients, because of the fear of contracting Covid 19, lockdowns and the inability to meet socially with family and friends. As the Irish Heart Foundation's local support meetings are currently not able to take place face to face, we have created some new ways to offer you support.

Firstly, we set up an **online support group on Facebook**, called the **Heart Support Network**, where patients can connect with each other and receive cardiac care updates, online exercise classes and access some of Ireland's leading cardiac nurses who are on hand to give advice and support to your queries. In addition, patient members of the group can also connect with each other and through posting, find comfort, support and some helpful tips from fellow patients. If you would like to join this group please search for **Heart Support Network — Irish Heart Foundation** on Facebook, or if reading this newsletter online, you can request to join by clicking this link: <https://bit.ly/36hL6xi>

Secondly, since September we are running monthly **heart failure information and support evenings** online, covering topics from the HSE's 'Living Well' series, such as diet, medication, stress management and exercise to name but a few subjects. There are also social opportunities at these meetings to chat and share a cuppa with other heart patients. If you would like to receive an invite to join these meetings please email [heartfailure@irishheart.ie](mailto:heartfailure@irishheart.ie) and we will send you a link by email ahead of the next meeting.

For those of you who are not online, we want to ensure you are getting beneficial information and support, so the **Heart Support Newsletter** was born. Each month we will provide you with information on our support evening topics, some patient experiences, recipes and lots more. As much of the content will be written by our patients, we hope that the newsletter will help you feel connected to other people just like you.

So sit back, relax and enjoy our first issue.

**From all at the Irish Heart Foundation and it's contributing members**

## The Happy Heart Space

"Don't worry about your heart, it will last as long as you live,"  
W.C. Fields (1880-1946) comedian, actor, juggler & writer

## Get support

The Irish Heart Foundation continues to support heart and stroke patients across Ireland.

### Nurse support line

Our nurses are available to answer your queries.

Monday to Friday  
9am to 1pm  
Call [01 6685001](tel:016685001)  
or email  
[support@irishheart.ie](mailto:support@irishheart.ie)

### Peer to peer support

Heart patients who may have had similar experiences to you can offer you help and support.

Call 087 7781562



## Over the page

A little bit of positive

Living well with heart failure - from Nurse Norma Caples

The patient experience - Pauline's story

Recipe of the month - Martin's no salt chicken stir-fry!



## Martin's no salt chicken stir-fry



### Ingredients

3 small chicken breasts  
1 tsp light soy sauce  
1 tsp water or sherry  
1/4 tbs ground/freshly-grated ginger  
2 tsb cornflour  
2 tsb vegetable oil  
2 cloves of garlic  
3 scallions  
1 small green chilli  
110g (4oz) mushrooms  
Small head broccoli  
6 tbs water  
Small tin of sweetcorn  
Wholegrain rice (1 cup per person plus 1)

### Method

1. Cook wholegrain rice as instructed on the packet
2. Mix soy, sherry/water, ginger, peeled and grated garlic and cornflour together
3. Cut the chicken in to bite size pieces and coat in mixture. Leave to stand for 10mins
4. Wash and prep vegetables; peel and chop scallions, de-seed pepper, slice mushrooms and dissect broccoli.
5. Heat 1 tsb of oil in large saucepan or wok and stir in chicken until its cooked through. Transfer the chicken on to a plate.
6. Heat remaining oil and stir fry prepared vegetables for 1 minute.
7. Add 6 tbs of water and cook for 3mins.
8. Return the chicken to the pan stir in drained sweetcorn and heat through on medium heat for 1 min
9. Serve with cooked wholegrain

## Living well with heart failure

### Tips from Norma Caples, Nurse Lead for the National Heart Programme

**Daily weight check:** preferably morning time, after going to the toilet and before dressing into day clothes. Write down your weight. Watch out for an increase of 2kg or 4lbs over three to seven days, especially if there is no change in diet.

**Medications:** take your medication every day and at the same time every day, if possible. Consider blister packs for medications. Take note of any food or health supplements that can interact with your medication.

**Exercise:** exercise daily, but know your limitation. Have a rest during the day, or when tired. If you have not been referred to cardiac rehab, speak to your GP to receive a referral.

**Diet:** go easy on the salt! Also avoid canned or packaged/processed foods, cakes and biscuits. Eat fresh/frozen veg, fresh fruit and fresh meat or fish. Know what fluid volumes are safe for you and ask your doctor or nurse what your healthy weight should be.

**Avoid illness:** make sure to get the flu and pneumonia vaccine from your GP or chemist. They are free to high risk groups.



### A LITTLE BIT OF POSITIVE

*"Life is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance, you must keep moving"*  
- Albert Einstein

### The patient experience - Pauline's story

At the age of 38, after having my third baby, I had a heart attack from a condition called SCAD, which is where a coronary artery in the heart tears, and the tear causes a flap of artery wall to block blood flow to the heart. Unfortunately, my local hospital misdiagnosed the condition and sent me home to suffer two further heart attacks, followed by a cardiac arrest and the need to have emergency open heart surgery to survive.



Thankfully, I made it through the life saving double by-pass surgery, but my heart had been so damaged from the delay in diagnosis and the numerous heart attacks that it's ejection fraction/heart function was at 10% post surgery. I was told I had heart failure. The term terrified me as I thought it meant there was no hope for me. A while later, when I got brave enough to read up on it, I discovered that this term describes a heart that doesn't pump blood properly, rather than describing the situation of being very close to dying.

Eight years on, I am still living with heart failure. My ejection fraction has improved somewhat, but I was fitted with an ICD because, by normal standards, it is still low. Being a heart failure patient means that I struggle with limited energy, so I work in short bouts and then have to take rests throughout the day but time and experience have taught me how to ration the energy that I do have, so that I can raise my three kids and help other heart patients diagnosed with SCAD and heart failure in Ireland. Hopefully I'll continue doing these things for many years to come!