

Caregiver Quick Start Guide

Caring for someone with an LVAD can feel overwhelming at first. This guide is designed to help you focus on what matters most early on. You do not need to know everything. You just need to know where to start.

This guide is for awareness and support only. Always follow guidance from your care team.

WHAT AN LVAD IS

An LVAD is a mechanical pump that helps circulate blood when the heart cannot do it on its own.

You will see:

- A controller outside the body
 - Batteries that power the device
 - A driveline that connects the device to the body
- It may look complex, but over time it becomes part of daily life.

WHAT IS NORMAL

These things may feel alarming at first but are often normal:

- No pulse
- Constant humming sound from the device
- Equipment always attached

When in doubt, ask. You are not expected to figure this out alone.

WHAT MATTERS MOST

Focus on these core priorities:

- Power awareness. Understanding that the device always needs power
- Observation. Noticing changes in how the person feels or acts
- Communication. Knowing how to reach the care team when needed

You are not managing the device. You are supporting the person.

WHEN TO PAY ATTENTION

Trust your instincts. Something may be different if you notice:

- Changes in mood or alertness
- The person seems more tired than usual
- They say they feel “off” or different
- Changes in their normal routine or behavior

If something feels different, it is okay to speak up and encourage them to check in with their care team.

KNOW YOUR CONTACTS

Keep this information accessible.

Do not rely only on your phone. Write it down somewhere accessible.

Support is not about having all the answers. It is about showing up, staying aware, and learning together.

PUBLIC SITUATIONS

You may find yourself explaining the LVAD to others. A simple way to say it:

“This is a mechanical heart pump that helps circulate blood.”

You do not need to explain everything. Clear and simple is enough.

YOUR ROLE AS A CAREGIVER

You are not expected to be a clinician.

Your role is to:

- Be present
- Be aware
- Help navigate daily situations
- Offer support and reassurance

You are part of the support system, not responsible for everything.

SUPPORTING DAILY LIFE

Small things make a big difference:

- Help create a calm, organized environment
- Be patient during transitions and adjustments
- Respect independence while offering support
- Understand that routines may change

Living with an LVAD is an adjustment for both of you.

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

Caregiving is demanding.

- Take breaks when you can
- Ask for help
- Talk to someone you trust
- Acknowledge your own stress

Taking care of yourself is part of supporting someone else.

REALITY CHECK

There will be a learning curve.

Things may feel:

- Overwhelming
- Uncertain
- Emotional

That is normal.

Confidence builds over time through experience.

