

HEART FAILURE SELF-CARE MANAGEMENT GUIDE

Helping patients with heart failure choose
healthy and independent lifestyles



EDUCATION AND INSTRUCTIONS ON

- . Medications
- . Daily Weight Monitoring
 - . Diet
 - . Activity

What is Heart Failure ?

Heart Failure is a serious illness in which the heart does not pump blood through your body as well as it should. It pumps less nutrient and oxygen-rich blood to the rest of the body. Being diagnosed with heart failure can be frightening. Having heart failure does not mean your heart is about to stop pumping.

RISK FACTORS THAT CAN CAUSE HEART FAILURE

- ◇ Coronary Artery Disease (blockages in the arteries of the heart)
- ◇ Heart Attacks (leads to permanent muscle damage)
- ◇ High Blood Pressure (heart has to work harder when your blood pressure is high)
- ◇ Heart Valve Disease
- ◇ Infection of the heart valves and/or heart muscles (endocarditis and/or myocarditis)
- ◇ Obesity/excess weight
- ◇ Alcoholism/Illegal drug use

GOOD NEWS . . .

Heart failure can almost always be managed. It is important that patients learn about heart failure and take an active part in the management of their illness. Patient **self-care** management refers to patients understanding their disease, recognizing signs and symptoms that require intervention and taking the appropriate actions to manage the symptoms.

PATIENT—SELF CARE MANAGEMENT INVOLVES:

- ◇ RECOGNIZING YOUR HEART FAILURE ZONE
- ◇ MEDICATION MANAGEMENT
- ◇ DAILY WEIGHT MONITORING
- ◇ EATING A LOW SODIUM DIET
- ◇ EXERCISING
- ◇ STOPPING SMOKING

SEE ZONE
CHART

Heart Failure Zones

Things to do EVERY DAY:

- ◇ Weigh yourself in the morning before breakfast and write it down
- ◇ Take your medications as directed by your doctor and/or practitioner
- ◇ Check for swelling in your feet, ankles, legs and stomach
- ◇ Eat only foods that are low in sodium; learn to check the food labels
- ◇ Balance your activity and rest periods
- ◇ Learn self-care measures by being able to recognize which heart failure zone you are in each day. Below is a chart that will help you to recognize symptoms and manage your heart failure.

WHICH HEART FAILURE ZONE ARE YOU IN TODAY?

GREEN ZONE

ALL CLEAR ZONE: THIS IS YOUR GOAL

- ◇ Your symptoms are under control and you have
- ◇ No shortness of breath
- ◇ No weight gain, or not more than 2 pounds (it can vary 1 to 2 pounds some days)
- ◇ No swelling of your feet, ankles, legs and/or stomach
- ◇ No chest pain

YELLOW ZONE

CAUTION ZONE: REQUIRES YOU TO TAKE ACTION

Call the doctor if you have:

- ◇ Weight gain of 2 or more pounds in one day
- ◇ New or increased cough
- ◇ Increased shortness of breath with activity
- ◇ Increase in the number of pillows you sleep on (to relieve symptoms of shortness of breath)
- ◇ Swelling to the feet, ankles and/or abdomen

RED ZONE:

EMERGENCY ZONE: TAKE IMMEDIATE ACTION

CALL 911 OR YOUR PHYSICIAN IMMEDIATELY IF YOU HAVE:

- ◇ Unrelieved shortness of breath (shortness of breath at rest)
- ◇ Wheezing or chest tightness at rest
- ◇ Need to sit in chair to sleep
- ◇ Weight gain of more than 5 pounds in one week
- ◇ Confusion

Emergency Number(s) _____

Take your Medications Daily

Medications for Your Heart

Your health care provider has prescribed medications to help control your symptoms and improve the efficiency of your heart. It is important that you take your medications

everyday as prescribed. Here are some tips to help you stick to your daily medication schedule.



How can I remember to take my medicine?

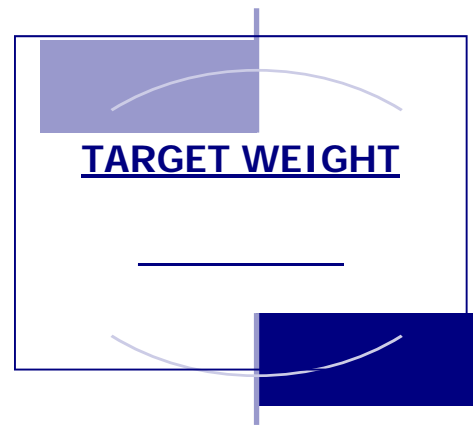
- ◇ Take it as advised by your doctor/healthcare provider
- ◇ Take it at the same time every day
- ◇ Take it along with meals if advised or other routine daily events, like brushing your teeth
- ◇ Use special pillboxes that help you keep track (day-of-the-week dosing slots)
- ◇ Ask people close to you to help remind you
- ◇ Keep a “medicine calendar” near your medicine, make a note every time you take your dose
- ◇ Put a sticker or reminder note on your medicine cabinet or refrigerator
- ◇ Always keep a list of your current medications and allergies with you.

Diuretics (Water Pills)

Patients being treated for heart failure are usually on 3 or more daily medications to control their disease. Diuretics, commonly known as “water pills” are the most frequently prescribed medications to help control congestive heart failure. These medications help the kidneys make more urine and get rid of excess fluid. Diuretics can also decrease fluid in the lungs and help you breathe more easily. These medications cause you to go to the bathroom more often. In conjunction with taking the diuretics, it is important that you limit your sodium intake. Some heart failure patients will be placed on a daily fluid restriction as well.

If you have a build up of fluid, for example you gain 3 to 4 pounds in 1 to 2 days, your doctor may have you adjust your “water pill” to help and get rid of the excess fluid. However, never adjust your medications unless you check with your physician. Taking too much diuretic on your own can cause serious and even life threatening problems as well.

Medication Type	WHAT THEY MAY BE PERSCRIBED FOR	ACTION	POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS
Diuretics	Treatment for edema (swelling), high blood pressure, heart failure	Remove excess water and sodium from the body through the urine	Muscle cramps, dizziness, lightheadedness, low or high potassium levels
Potassium	Most diuretics (water pills) remove potassium from the body, to help reduce the risk of low potassium levels in the blood	Replaces potassium lost from side effects of taking diuretics	Low or high potassium muscle cramps, palpitations, fatigue
ACE Inhibitors	Treatment of high blood pressure, congestive heart failure, decrease amount of damage to the heart following a heart attack	Relax blood vessels, reduce workload of the heart	Rash, dizziness, cough
Nitrates	Angina (chest pain)	Relax blood vessels, increase blood flow to the heart muscle, decrease workload of the heart	Headache, flushing, dizziness
Anticoagulants	To prevent blood clots from forming or to keep existing clots from getting larger	Decrease clotting ability of the blood	Easier bruising, stomach irritation, unusual bleeding
Plavix (Antiplatelet)	To help reduce strokes, heart attacks, and other problems caused by atherosclerosis; Prevent clots from forming in stents	Prevents platelets from "sticking" together and causing clots	Easier bruising, unusual bleeding
Aspirin (Antiplatelet)	Prevent the formation of blood clots, reduce the risk of stroke, offers protective effect against heart attack	Decreases the "stickiness" of platelets therefore reducing the risk of clots- Different mechanism than Plavix	Easier bruising, unusual bleeding



- Weigh every morning before breakfast
- Use same set of scales
- Wear the same type of clothing
- Urinate prior to weighing
- Record your weight
- Compare it to the target weight
- Adjust the medication as instructed
- Some patients will be instructed on taking daily blood pressures, record that morning reading along with your weight

- Fill in the month and the date on the chart/calendar
- Write down your weight each day
- If you miss one day, leave the space blank
- Weigh yourself on the next day and write it on the correct date
- Take your weight chart with you whenever you see your doctor

Daily Weight Chart Month: <u>August</u>						
Sunday 1	Monday 2	Tuesday 3	Wednesday 4	Thursday 5	Friday 6	Saturday 7
165	166	165	165	166	164	165

YELLOW ZONE

CAUTION ZONE: REQUIRES YOU TO TAKE ACTION

Call the doctor if you have:

- ◇ Weight gain of 2 or more pounds in one day
- ◇ New or increased cough
- ◇ Increased shortness of breath with activity
- ◇ Increase in the number of pillows you sleep on (to relieve symptoms of shortness of breath)
- ◇ Swelling to the feet, ankles and/or abdomen

Month _____

[illegible]

Lower Your Sodium Intake

The relationship between proper nutrition and control of heart failure is well understood: low salt intake, and a well-balanced diet are the mainstays of helping patients manage heart failure.

DAILY SODIUM INTAKE GOAL

Sodium intake should be limited in patients with heart failure because it is not efficiently excreted from their system. In patients taking diuretics, the drug is rendered less effective when sodium intake is not limited.

NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF SODIUM

- ◇ Causes you to retain excess water
- ◇ Increases the workload on your heart
- ◇ Makes your medications less effective
- ◇ Fluid retention leads to symptoms of shortness of breath that limits daily activities.

TIPS TO LOWER SODIUM INTAKE

- ◇ Stop using the salt shaker **(remove it from the dinner table)**
- ◇ Do not add salt to food during preparation
- ◇ Read food labels carefully
- ◇ Use spices and seasonings that are salt free. (ketchup, salad dressings, etc.)
- ◇ Look at sodium content in over the counter medications, ask your pharmacist for help
- ◇ When eating out, ask for dressings and sauces on the side
- ◇ Always ask for freshly prepared choices, such as fresh fruits and salads
- ◇ Avoid vending machines
- ◇ Check with your physician before using salt substitutes
- ◇ Sea Salt is not a safe alternative to salt; it still contains sodium
- ◇ Avoid fast food restaurants where food arrives pre-seasoned/processed
- ◇ Stop eating processed and high-sodium foods
 - ◇ **Greatest source of sodium (up to 80%) is the salt and other sodium compounds added to food during processing**

LOOK FOR LOWER SODIUM FOOD CHOICES

AVOID:

Buttermilk
Bologna
Fried Rice
Biscuit
Bacon, 3 slices
Cheese, American
Dill pickle
Stewed canned tomatoes
Potatoes au gratin (1cup)
Frankfurter, 1
Croutons
Instant Oatmeal
Canned vegetables
Salt, salt substitutes, sea salt

TRY THESE INSTEAD:

Skim Milk/1%
Low sodium bologna
Brown Rice
Bagel
Ham, fresh, 2 slices
Cheese, American, low sodium
Fresh Cucumber
Fresh stewed tomatoes
Baked potato
Hamburger, extra lean (1oz)
Unsalted sunflower seeds
Regular Oatmeal
Fresh/fresh frozen vegetables
Fresh herbs, spices & peppers

Main
sources
of sodium
in
the
U.S.
diet



■ 5% added while cooking
■ 6% added while eating
■ 12% from natural sources
■ 77% from processed and prepared foods

Source: Mayo Clinic

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/sodium>

EAT MORE OF THESE

Fat free/1 % dairy	Fresh vegetables
Fresh fruits	Fresh meat, poultry & fish
Freshly squeezed fruit	Plain frozen vegetables
Canned fruits	Brown rice
Fresh frozen, plain fruit	Whole grain cereals
Unsalted nuts	Dried lentils, beans, peas

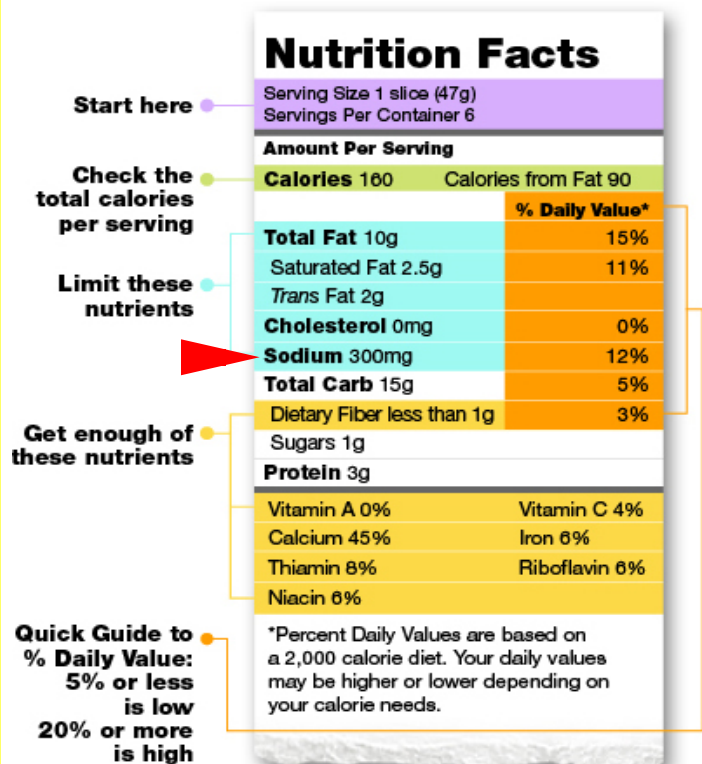
LEARN TO READ FOOD LABELS

1. FIND THE SERVING SIZE
2. NOTE THE SERVINGS PER CONTAINER
3. FIND THE AMOUNT OF SODIUM PER SERVING
4. NUMBER OF SERVINGS YOU EAT

The nutrition facts label to the left contains 300mg of sodium per one serving (slice). If you eat two slices then your sodium intake will be 600mg. The items highlighted in blue are items that most patients should limit in their daily diet. Your physician and/or medical practitioner will tell you the amount of sodium you should have in your daily diet. Patients with moderate to severe heart failure (symptoms with light exercise, activities of daily living or at rest) are usually asked to limit their sodium intake to 2000mg per day. Always check the labels on over the counter medications as well.

2000mg = 2 gm

A teaspoon of salt = 2,300 mg of sodium



Develop an Exercise Plan

Exercise is beneficial for your heart and your general health. A regular program of physical activity will enable you to increase your strength gradually and avoid overtaxing your heart.

Lack of activity may have long-term detrimental effects on physical functioning.



Benefits of Exercise

- Help increase muscle tone and strength
- Improve your ability to function on a daily basis
- Improve your quality of life
- Reduce the effects of osteoporosis
- Reduce your CHF symptoms (such as shortness of breath and fatigue)

Tips and Guidelines for Exercise

Exercise does not have to be strenuous to be beneficial, in fact, strenuous activities should be avoided. Before you start any exercise program, be sure to:

1. Talk with your health care provider and set safe, realistic goals
2. Plan your exercise period when you feel the most energetic (first thing in the morning, after a nap)
3. Do not exercise immediately after eating (wait at least one hour)
4. Many activities, such as stretching, can be done while sitting down
5. Plan an indoor exercise activity for rainy days, when temperatures are below 40°F or above 80°F or on high humidity or smog days.
6. Get walking shoes that fit comfortably and have good support
7. Always do a warm up and cool down; slow walking and/or stretching exercises
8. Exercise at a slow and steady pace.
9. Do not hold your breath when exercising or doing any kind of activity
10. Consider an exercise partner; you will be more likely to stick with your program
11. Exercise for short periods throughout the day and plan rest between periods of exercise, for example, a 10 minute walk in the morning, followed by a 10-minute stretch in the afternoon, followed by a 10-minute evening walk.

***ALWAYS MAKE SURE YOU CAN PASS THE TALK TEST; YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO CARRY ON A CONVERSATION WHILE YOU ARE DOING ANY ACTIVITY. IF YOU CAN NOT CARRY ON A CONVERSTATION, YOU ARE EXERCISING TOO HARD AND NEED TO SLOW DOWN**

Signs of Overexertion

1. Shortness of breath that prevents you from completing a sentence or does not improve when you slow down or stop
2. Pain, tightness or discomfort in your chest, arms, shoulders, neck
3. Dizziness, feeling faint or lightheaded
4. Irregular heart rate or palpitations
5. Unusual or extreme fatigue
6. Severe sweating
7. Nausea and/or vomiting

Times to Avoid Exercise

1. Feelings of exhaustion
2. Shortness of breath at rest or more symptoms than usual
3. Symptoms of infection such as fever and chills
4. Presence of chest pain
5. Major changes in your medication regimen

Types of Exercise

Aerobic Conditioning

improves the health of your heart and lungs. It also helps to manage your weight. With aerobic exercise, you move continuously to increase your heart rate and keep it elevated for a sustained period of time. How long you can exercise aerobically will depend on your fitness level. A general guideline is to work up to 20 to 30 minutes a day, three to four days a week.

Flexibility and stretching exercises are important for increasing your body's range of motion. They also help lessen muscle tension and soreness, and reduce your risk of injury. We often overlook stretching and range of motion exercises, but they are very important in maintaining overall fitness.

Strength Training

improves muscular capacity and bone density. Stronger muscles and bones make it easier to do everyday activities like carry shopping bags or do yard work. The most common strength training methods are working with free weights, resistance rubber bands or weight machines. It is very important to avoid strength imbalances by working all the major muscle groups.

Intimacy and sexual relations is a concern for many people with heart disease. Many people with heart failure wonder if they can still have sex. The answer is yes. Sexual activity is not dangerous to your heart. Just as any other activity, you should not have sex if you are feeling ill, are very short of breath or are having chest pains.

Also, keep in mind that some people with heart failure will have a decreased sex drive and/or problems with erectile dysfunction. If you are have concerns related to sexual relations, do not hesitate to talk with your healthcare provider.



To increase your comfort and enjoyment, consider the following precautionary measures.

- ◇ Pick a time when you feel rested and comfortable
- ◇ Avoid sex after eating a big meal or drinking alcohol
- ◇ Be sure the room temperature is not too cool or warm
- ◇ Choose a comfortable non-strenuous position

Helpful Resources

ECM or Shoals Hospital Contacts

Cardiac Rehabilitation (256) 768-9640

Pulmonary Rehabilitation (256) 768-9397

Dietitians

ECM Hospital (256) 768-9350

Shoals Hospital (256) 386-1636

Mended Hearts (888) 432-7899
Www.mendedhearts.org

Websites

American College of Cardiology
www.acc.org

American Heart Association
www.americanheart.org

Mayo Clinic
www.mayohealth.org

American Diabetes Association
www.diabetes.org

National Institutes of Health
www.nih.gov

American Council on Exercise (ACE)
www.acefitness.org



Our Mission:

“We are a community of compassionate and skilled caregivers devoted to meeting the physical, spiritual and emotional needs of those we are privileged to serve.”

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