

Heart Failure (HF): Patient Self-Care Worksheet

Learn how to manage your condition:

- What about the disease process and risks?
- How can medicine, diet, and exercise help?
- What can YOU do to improve your health?

What does heart failure mean?

- It means that your heart does not pump enough blood to meet your body's needs.
- Blood can “back up” in your lungs.
- Too much blood in your lungs causes shortness of breath.
- You may cough more or wake up at night short of breath.
- Blood can also “back up” in other parts of your body.
- You may have swelling in your legs and feet or in your abdomen.
- You may also feel tired and not feel like eating.

Heart failure can be managed.

This booklet was put together to help you understand **your role** (“self-care”) in keeping your heart failure under control. Self-care includes:

1. Taking your medicines as ordered by your doctor
2. Decreasing the amount of sodium in your diet
3. Avoiding alcohol
4. Exercising and staying active
5. Checking your weight daily and taking action **right away** when your weight goes up
6. Monitoring yourself for symptoms and taking action **right away** when they occur
7. Seeing your doctor regularly

- It is important to understand the symptoms that you have when your heart failure worsens.
- You will tend to have the same symptoms each time your heart failure worsens.

Symptoms I have had are:



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Medicines

- There are 4 types of medicines that are usually used to manage heart failure.
- You may be on more medicines than these.
- Your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist will give you more specific information about your medicine.
- Always check before taking over-the-counter medicine or herbal supplements.
- Some medicine can be harmful for patients with heart failure.
- Your home care nurse will work with you to make sure you understand all of your medicines.
- If you often forget to take your medicine, your nurse can show you different ways to help you remember to take your medicine at the right times.

Heart Failure Medicines

Diuretics (“water pills”)

These drugs work in your kidney and help you get rid of extra fluid and sodium through your urine.

I am taking: _____

Angiotensin converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitor

These drugs work to open up blood vessels. This makes it easier for your heart to pump. Blood pressure is lowered. Use of ACE inhibitors for heart failure contributes to a longer, healthier life.

I am taking: _____

Beta blockers

These drugs work to improve heart muscle function and block chemicals that can make your heart failure worsen. Blood pressure is lowered. Use of beta blockers in heart failure contributes to a longer, healthier life.

I am taking: _____

Digoxin

Digoxin makes your heart beat stronger and at a regular rhythm and helps to reduce heart failure symptoms. Your nurse will teach you to check your pulse when you are on Digoxin. Call if your pulse is less than _____

I am taking: _____

Diet & Nutrition:

- Sodium makes your body retain fluid.
 - ♦ Too much fluid makes your heart work harder and can make your heart failure worse.
 - ♦ Your weight will increase and you may develop symptoms.
- Try to keep your sodium intake about 2000 milligrams (mg) per day or as ordered by your doctor.
- Salt is a major source of sodium. One teaspoon of salt contains 2400 mg of sodium!
- Your nurse or a dietitian will help you look at your own diet, help you read food labels, and can give you lists of foods that are high and low in sodium.
- Avoid alcohol as it can make your heart failure worsen.
- Some patients with heart failure should limit the amount of liquids they drink.
I should limit my liquids to: _____

How can I lower my sodium intake?

Check off the things you think you can do.

- Do not add salt to my foods during cooking.
- Take the salt shaker off of my kitchen table.
- Try other seasonings to add flavor such as lemon juice, onion or garlic powder, or herbs.
- Read food labels to see which foods are high in sodium

I will avoid high sodium foods such as:

- Canned soups and vegetables
- Frozen dinners
- Hot dogs or packaged lunch meats
- Cheese and cheese spreads
- Deli meats such as ham
- Ketchup, soy sauce, salad dressings, barbeque sauce
- Frozen dinners that are high in sodium

I will eat lower sodium foods more often such as:

- Lean meats
- Low fat milk
- Reduced sodium cheese
- Cereals low in sodium
- Fresh fruits and vegetables

When going out to eat, I will:

- Choose items that are listed as “healthy choice” or “low sodium” on the menu
- Choose broiled or grilled foods instead of fried foods
- Ask for sauces and salad dressings “on the side”

Staying Active and Safe:

- Exercise provides many benefits for you when you have heart failure.
- Activities such as walking, bike riding, or swimming are good exercise options.
- Exercise will:
 - ◆ Improve your muscle tone
 - ◆ Strengthen your heart
 - ◆ Increase your energy
 - ◆ Make you feel better
- Before starting an exercise program, your heart failure should be stable.
- Your weight should be at baseline and you should not be experiencing symptoms.
- It is important to start slowly when you are not used to exercise.
- A home physical therapist can help you begin your exercise program.

Modified Borg Scale

You should monitor yourself for fatigue and shortness of breath when you exercise. Your home care nurse or therapist will teach you how to use the Borg scale so that you can rate your shortness of breath and/or fatigue during activity and exercise.

Scale	Severity
0	No breathlessness/Fatigue at all
1	Very Slight Breathlessness/Fatigue
2	Slight Breathlessness/Fatigue
3	Moderate Breathlessness/Fatigue
4	Somewhat Severe Breathlessness/Fatigue
5	Severe Breathlessness/Fatigue
6	
7	Very Severe Breathlessness/Fatigue
8	
9	Very Very Severe Breathlessness/Fatigue
10	Maximum Breathlessness/Fatigue

Telehealth Strategies...

In addition to seeing you in your home, your home care nurse may also suggest or use "telehealth" to monitor your heart failure.

What is telehealth ?

1. *Your home care nurse calls you on the phone – simple telephone monitoring*

You will be asked questions about your daily weights or if you are having symptoms. Your nurse will review information you need to know to better manage your heart failure.

2. *Telemonitoring*

A monitoring system is placed in your home. This may include a special scale, blood pressure cuff, or other device(s). The monitor may also include questions on a computer that you answer each day. Some systems include computer screens where you and your nurse can see each other while you talk. Your nurse will teach you how to use the telemonitoring system.

Your information (weight, blood pressure, etc.) is sent to the home care agency computer, usually over the telephone lines. A nurse at the agency checks your information every day. If there are changes, your nurse will call you or visit you at home.

3. *You call the home care agency*

Your weight may be up or you are having symptoms. You may just want to ask a question. The home care nurse may give you advice over the telephone, may want to see you at your home to check your condition, or may tell you to call 911 if your symptoms are severe.

A sudden increase in weight means that your body is retaining fluid. If your weight goes up, this is the time to TAKE ACTION . Do not wait for other symptoms to occur. An extra diuretic pill for a day or two is usually prescribed until your weight comes back down. Action taken right away will help keep you out of the hospital. If you do have a weight gain, think about possible reasons why?

DAILY WEIGHT LOG

Record your weight each day: Same scale, Same time of day, Same type of clothing

REPORT! Weight gain of _____ or more pounds within a _____ day period

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday

Your Action Plan:

Use this guide to help you report changes in your symptoms to your doctor or home care provider.

Reporting symptoms early may keep you out of the hospital.

You are doing WELL when:

- Your weight is stable
- You have no trouble breathing
- You can do your normal activities
- You have no changes in your symptoms
- Call _____

In the next 24 hours when:

- Your weight goes up _____pounds in _____days
- You have new swelling in your feet, ankles, hands, or abdomen
- You have a dry, harsh cough that does not go away
- You use 2 or more pillows or a recliner to breathe better at night if this is different from how you usually sleep
- You feel more tired or have less energy than usual
- You have side effects from your medicines

Call your doctor RIGHT AWAY when:

- You have trouble breathing – Call 911 for severe shortness of breath
- You feel dizzy
- You feel very anxious
- Call 911 if you have chest pain that does not go away

My Personal Plan:

I would like to work on the following areas to manage my heart failure:

- Taking my Medicines
- Regular Exercise
- Monitoring My Weight
- Eating Healthy
- Other _____

My Personal Plan:

My GOAL for the next month is:

Possible problems in meeting my goal:

Things that would help me meet my goal:

