Congestive Heart Failure
From Heart Failure to Heart Success
# Table of Contents

## Understanding Heart Failure

What is Congestive Heart Failure (CHF)?  4

## Managing Heart Failure (Part I)

- Symptoms of Heart Failure ................................................................. 5
- Signs of Heart Failure ........................................................................ 6
- Calling for help .................................................................................. 8
- Daily weight monitoring................................................................. 9-10

## Managing Heart Failure (Part II)

- Quit smoking .................................................................................. 11
- Avoid alcohol .................................................................................. 12
- Heart Failure medications............................................................... 13-15

## Managing Heart Failure (Part III)

- How to eat less salt ........................................................................ 16-19
- How to read a food label................................................................. 20-21
- Food examples ................................................................................ 22-23
- How to drink less fluid ................................................................. 24-25
- Being active .................................................................................. 26-27
- Depression .................................................................................... 27

## Bringing It All Together

- 6 steps to Heart Failure success ................................................... 29
- Heart Zones .................................................................................. 30
- Resources ..................................................................................... 31
UNDERSTANDING HEART FAILURE
What is Congestive Heart Failure (CHF)?

Heart failure does not mean that the heart has stopped, but that the heart is weak and cannot pump blood well.

When the heart does not pump well, it can make you feel weak, tired or dizzy.

Heart failure causes water to leak out of your blood vessels. This water can build up in your lungs and make you short of breath. It can also cause your legs to swell.

A few common causes of CHF:

- Coronary artery disease
- An enlarged heart (Cardiomyopathy)
- Inflamed heart muscle (Myocarditis)
- Heart valve problems
- High blood pressure
- Lung disease
Symptoms of Heart Failure (CHF)

- Coughing
- Tiredness
- Shortness of breath
- Pulmonary edema (excess fluid in lungs)
- Pleural effusion (excess fluid around lungs)
- Swelling in abdomen (ascites)
- Swelling in ankles and legs
- Pumping action of the heart grows weaker
• Signs such as poor appetite, trouble breathing, ankle and/or leg swelling, or weight gain may mean your heart failure is getting worse.

• Heart failure can get worse silently.

• These signs can quickly lead to serious heart and lung problems requiring a hospital stay.
MANAGING HEART FAILURE
Calling for Help

**Call 911 for help if you have:**
- Chest discomfort or pain that lasts more than 15 minutes and is not relieved with nitroglycerin or rest
- Severe, continuing shortness of breath

**Urgent symptoms - call your doctor:**
- Worsening shortness of breath
- New shortness of breath while resting
- Trouble sleeping due to difficulty breathing
  - Waking up suddenly at night struggling to breathe
  - A need to sleep sitting up or using more pillows than usual
- Fast or irregular heart beat, palpitations or a "racing heart" that persists and makes you feel dizzy
- Coughing up frothy sputum
- Feeling like you may pass out
Daily weight monitoring

Weigh Every Day

✓ Weight gain is the first symptom that your Heart Failure is getting worse.

✓ You can gain up to 10 pounds of “extra” weight from fluid before noticing any problems.

✓ If you gain more than 3 pounds in one day, or 5 pounds in one week, call your doctor.
Daily weight monitoring

- Weigh at the same time each day
- In the morning after you empty your bladder (urinate)
- Before getting dressed, eating or drinking
- In the same type of clothing
- Use the same scale on a flat, hard surface
- Write down your weight
- Compare it to your “dry” weight, not the weight from yesterday
- Use the weight log provided in this booklet or a calendar to write down your daily weights
Quit Smoking

Smoking is a major risk factor for heart disease.

Successful ideas to help you stop smoking:

S = Set a start date
T = Tell family, friends and coworkers you are going to quit
A = Anticipate and plan for challenges you will face while quitting
R = Remove cigarettes and other tobacco products from your car, home and work
T = Talk to your doctor about getting help to quit

Huntsville Hospital's Center for Lung Health offers Freedom from Smoking® Classes. Call (256) 265-7071 for information.
Avoid Alcohol

- Alcohol can be harmful for patients with heart failure.
- Any alcohol intake must be counted in your overall daily total fluid intake (this includes all forms such as beer, wine, liquor, etc).
Most people with heart failure require several medications to achieve best results. You may be given any of the following medicines.

**ACE INHIBITOR**

*What they do:*
- Block the effects of harmful stress hormones (substances produced by the body that make HF worsen)
- Lower blood pressure and decrease strain on the heart
- Make it easier for the heart to pump and improve blood flow

*Possible side effects:*
- Low blood pressure (may make you feel dizzy)
- Dry cough
- Cause changes in kidney function
- Cause excess potassium in body
- Cause swelling of mouth, lips or tongue

**DIURETIC (“Water Pill”)**

*What they do:*
- Help rid the body of excess water
- Reduce swelling and improves breathing so that heart does not have to work as hard

*Possible side effects:*
- Frequent urination
- Loss of potassium, magnesium or sodium from the body
- Kidney problems
- Low blood pressure (may make you feel dizzy)
- High blood sugar
- Gout

**BETA-BLOCKER**

*What they do:*
- Low blood pressure and slow heart rate by altering hormones that are damaging the heart
- May strengthen the heart’s pumping action over time

*Possible side effects:*
- Low blood pressure (may make you feel dizzy)
- Low heart rate
- Tiredness
- Sexual dysfunction

**ARB**

*What they do:*
- Low blood pressure and decrease strain on the heart
- May be prescribed instead of an ACE Inhibitor

*Possible side effects:*
- Low blood pressure (may make you feel dizzy)
- Change in kidney function
- Cause excess potassium in the body
- Swelling of the mouth, lips or tongue is rare
Heart Failure Medications

**DIGOXIN®**

What they do:
- Slow heart rate which helps the heart pump more blood with each beat
- More oxygen-rich blood reaches the body

Possible side effects:
- Slow heart rate
- Yellow-tinted vision
- Loss of appetite
- Stomach pain, nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Heart rhythm problems
- Tiredness or weakness

**POTASSIUM**

What they do:
- An electrolyte your body needs to function properly

Possible side effects:
- Diuretics (water pills) may cause you to lose potassium along with urine
- Patients with kidney problems or who are taking an Aldosterone Antagonist or an ACE inhibitor with their diuretic may not need extra potassium

**ANTICOAGULANTS**

What they do:
- Thin the blood to prevent blood clots

Possible side effects:
- Bruising
- Bleeding

**AVOID THE FOLLOWING OVER THE COUNTER MEDICINES:**
- Aleve
- Advil
- Antacids high in sodium
- Some herbal medicines

You may take TYLENOL® for pain.
How To Be Successful With Medications

- Keep a list of all of your medicines
- Take the list or the original prescription bottles of medicine you are taking to all doctor appointments
- Tell your doctor about any herbal medicines you are taking
- Take all of your medicines as instructed by your doctor or pharmacist
- Always keep at least one week ahead of your medicines and if ordering from a mail order pharmacy, keep three weeks ahead
MANAGING HEART FAILURE
• Salt is also called “sodium” and is found in many foods.

• Most foods have salt even if you can’t see or taste it.

• Salt acts like a sponge and makes the body hold water.

• Eating salt can cause weight gain, swelling in your legs and water in your lungs making you short of breath.

• Your medicines will not help your symptoms if you eat more than your daily limit of sodium or salt.

• Sodium is measured in milligrams (mg). A low-sodium diet contains no more than 2000mg of sodium per day.
How to Eat Less Salt (Sodium)

Steps to lower the salt in your diet:

- Take the salt shaker off the table
- Do not add salt when cooking
- Use “no salt” herbs and spices like Mrs. Dash
- Avoid spices and mixes with the word “salt” or “sodium” in the name
- Never use “salt substitutes” (contain high amounts of potassium instead of salt)

Tips to help you eat less salt (sodium)

1st

Pick foods naturally low in sodium.
- Choose fresh fruits, vegetables, poultry and fish because they have very little sodium
- Choose low-sodium options when you don’t eat fresh food
- Dried beans, peas, rice and lentils are excellent low-sodium choices as long as you don’t add salt pork or bacon grease when cooking them

2nd

Learn to read food labels
- By reading food labels, you learn which foods are high and low in sodium
- Avoid frozen dinners, frozen snack foods, canned vegetables and instant hot cereals
How to Eat Less Salt (sodium)

Tips on How to Eat Less Salt

When you eat out:

• Ask for food cooked without salt.

• Avoid butter, cheese and sauces.

• Avoid fried foods – choose grilled, baked or steamed foods.

• Choose oil and vinegar salad dressing.

• Limit or choose fast food items with less sodium.

• Avoid bacon, sausage and ham.
How to Eat Less Salt

Managing Heart Failure

Choose foods with less than 140 mg of sodium per serving.

Reading a Food Label

This food has 30 mg of sodium in ½ cup. This food is a good choice! Try to limit the salt to 140 mg or less per serving of food.
How to Eat Less Salt

This food has 220 mg of sodium per ½ cup.

This food is not a good choice!

Choose items that are labeled:

- Low Sodium
- No Salt Added
- Sodium Free
How to Eat Less Salt

Avoid these high sodium foods:

- Fast Foods
- Frozen Foods
- Processed Foods
- Cheeses
- Processed or Deli Meats
- Canned Meats
- Canned Vegetables
- Frozen Dinners
- Snack foods
- Bottled Dressings
- Bottled Condiments
How to Eat Less Salt

These foods are low in salt (sodium):

- Fresh Fruits
- Fresh Vegetables
- Fresh Chicken
- Roast
- Fish
- Dried Beans
- Yogurt
- Eggs
- Graham Crackers
- Oatmeal
- Frozen Vegetables
- Fresh Herbs

Managing Heart Failure
How to Drink less fluid (liquid)

- Drinking too much fluid or liquid will cause:
  - Weight gain
  - Shortness of breath
  - Swelling
  - Medicines to be less effective

Drinking an extra two cups of fluid will cause you to gain a pound of fluid weight.

Think about a 2 liter soda bottle as your guide to your Maximum daily fluids for one day.
How to Drink less fluid (liquid)

How to measure fluid intake for the day:

- When measuring liquid:
  - Use a 2 liter pitcher
  - When drinking fluid or anything that counts as liquid, pour the same amount of water into the pitcher
  - When the pitcher fills up, you cannot have any more fluid for the day
- When measuring ice:
  - Put the same amount of ice that you will eat or drink and put it into your pitcher and let it melt.

What is considered a fluid?
- Anything you drink
- Gelatin
- Fluid in soups
- ice

Tips for a dry mouth

- Let a piece of sugar-free, hard candy dissolve in your mouth
- Chew gum
- Freeze 15-18 grapes and eat them slowly letting them melt in your mouth
- Let ice melt in you mouth (remember, you still have to count the fluid in ice)
Be active!

Activity Goals
- Be physically active 30 minutes a day for most days of the week.
- Try getting three 10-minute blocks per day.

Signs of Overexertion
Slow down or stop if you have any of the following symptoms while being active:
- Shortness of breath that prevents you from completing a sentence
- Shortness of breath that doesn’t get better when you slow down or stop the activity within 5 – 10 minutes
- Dizziness or lightheadedness longer than 10-15 minutes

Walking Goals (Start slow)
How to begin:
- Week 1: Walk 5-10 minutes twice a day
- Week 2: Walk 10-20 minutes twice a day
- Week 3: Walk 20-30 minutes each day

You can begin by walking as little as 5 minutes each day and gradually increase.

If you have any of these symptoms while being active, slow down. If the symptoms do not get better, stop the activity. Call 911 if your chest pain or other symptoms are not relieved.
Be active!

Sexual Activity

- Talk openly with your partner about your sexual needs
- Pick a time for sex when you feel rested
- Avoid sex after eating a big meal or drinking alcohol
- Have sex in a comfortable room that is not too hot or too cold
- Use foreplay to help your heart get ready for intercourse
- Do not support your weight with your arms
- Have sex in less stressful positions such as lying on the bottom or on your side

Work

Ask your doctor about a “return to work” date and any restrictions you may have.

Use the following guidelines to help you make decisions about work:
- Being active will help you to have more energy to do your job.
- You may need to work part-time until you build up your strength.

Depression

National Suicide Hotline
1-800-273-8255

Seeing a counselor can help you rethink some of your worries and feel better.
- Follow your exercise or activity plan doing things you enjoy
- Get a good night’s sleep
- Follow your treatment plan including taking your medicines as instructed
- Tell your doctor if you have any feelings of anxiousness, hopelessness, sadness or “empty” mood, if you are irritable, restless or lack energy
BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER
6 Steps to Heart Failure Success

1. Weigh every day.
   - At the same time first thing in the morning
   - After you go to the bathroom and empty your bladder
   - In the same kind of clothing
   - Write it down
   - Compare it to your dry weight

2. Take your medicines as listed on your medicine bottles.
   - Do not skip doses even if you feel well
   - Let your doctor know if you are having side effects to your medicines
   - Check your medicine bottles every week to making sure you do not run out

3. Keep salt and fluids at bay.
   - Read food labels
   - Keep your total salt intake to 1 teaspoon/day (2000 mg)
   - Don’t add salt to your foods at the table or while cooking
   - Keep total fluids to eight 8-ounce glasses/day

4. Follow your activity program.
   - Moving will help you have more energy and feel better
   - Start with 10 minutes of exercise each day and build up
   - Stop exercising if you feel chest pain, become dizzy or severely short of breath. Don’t be afraid to discuss your ability to have sex with your doctor

5. Know when to get help.
   - Call 9-1-1 if you have chest pain that lasts more than 15 minutes and is not relieved with nitroglycerin and rest or have severe shortness of breath, fainting or passing out
   - Call your doctor if you are in the “Yellow Zone” or “Red Zone”

6. Keep all your medical appointments.
   - Keep all your medical appointments
   - Bring your current medication list and weight log each time you visit the doctor
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ALL CLEAR – GREEN ZONE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• NO shortness of breath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• NO weight gain of more than 2 pounds in one day OR 5 pound weight gain in one week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• NO swelling in the feet, ankles, legs or abdomen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• NO chest pain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• NO other significant symptoms</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CAUTION – YELLOW ZONE: (CALL YOUR DOCTOR)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• 3 pound weight gain in one day OR 5 pound weight gain in one week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• More shortness of breath than normal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• You need to sleep upright in a chair in order to breathe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• MORE swelling in the feet, ankles, legs or abdomen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Dry, hacking cough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Feeling more tired than usual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Dizziness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Feeling uneasy… you know something is not right</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EMERGENCY – RED ZONE: SEEK HELP NOW (CALL 9-1-1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Struggling to breathe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Unrelieved shortness of breath while sitting still</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Experiencing chest pain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Feel confused or can’t think clearly</td>
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Learn more about Congestive Heart Failure:

**American Heart Association**  
http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/Conditions/HeartFailure/Heart-Failure_UCM_002019_SubHomePage.jsp

**National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute**  
http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/health-topics/topics/hf/

**The Cleveland Clinic**  
http://www.clevelandclinicmeded.com/medicalpubs/diseasemanagement/cardiology/heart-failure/

**Sources for this publication:**  
Huntsville Hospital Congestive Heart Failure Clinic  
Heart Failure Society of America
Every gift makes a difference! Your tax deductible donation to the Foundation will help provide lifesaving equipment, as well as health and hope to our patients.

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