



Taking Control of Heart Failure



When you have heart failure, your daily health habits--what you choose to do on a day-to-day basis--become very important. By adopting healthy lifestyle habits, you can prevent your heart condition from getting worse and even help improve your heart's function over time.

This guide will help equip you with the essential tools you need to take control of your heart failure and to effectively manage your symptoms.

The Meaning of “Heart Failure”

Although it sounds scary, the term “heart failure” does not mean that your heart has stopped working. Rather, it just means that your heart is a little weaker than it should be. Like any other weakened muscle in the body, it is possible to help strengthen it through a combination of healthy lifestyle choices and appropriate medications. Because of this, when it comes to heart failure, your daily health habits become very important. You may already be on the right medications, but are your day to day habits and activities optimized to help your heart?

Major Lifestyle Habits that Help the Heart

- ❖ Eating less **salt**
- ❖ Getting regular **physical activity**
- ❖ **Not smoking tobacco**
- ❖ Taking all of your **medications as prescribed**

So what if you are not currently doing these things? Be encouraged--it is never too late to start making and achieving your healthy living goals. This Health & Wellness program will help you do just that.

Tracking Your Weight

One of the most important things you can do in managing your heart condition is to monitor your weight daily.

How to Properly Monitor Your Weight

1. **Weigh yourself at the same time every day.**
 - We suggest weighing every morning just after waking up (and after urinating).
 - Always weigh yourself with the same amount of clothing on (or without clothing).
 - Always use the same scale.
2. **Write down your weight along with the date on a daily weight log (or calendar).**
 - We recommend using a format similar to your Heart Health Diary where you can track your weight along with your blood pressure and symptoms.
3. **Weigh yourself again to confirm the number.**
4. **Bring your weight log to all of your doctor's appointments.**

What Can Worsen My Condition?

There are a few things that can “trigger” your heart failure and quickly make your heart function worse, resulting in new or worsened symptoms and possibly leading to a hospital stay:

- ➔ Forgetting to take your medicines
- ➔ Not following your diet (*such as eating too much salt or drinking too much fluids in one day*)
- ➔ Drinking too much alcohol

Don’t put your health on the line; rather, be encouraged to make smart choices throughout your day, every day.

What Can I Do to Help My Heart?

- Take all your medicines every day as directed.
- Check your weight and blood pressure daily.
- Avoid or limit alcohol and caffeine.
- Decrease your salt and sodium intake.
- Limit your fluid intake to the amount recommended by your doctor.
- Eat a diet low in saturated fat and trans fat.
- Get some physical activity every day.
- Quit using tobacco.
- Get enough sleep every night.
- Manage your stress level.
- Develop a strong support system.

Monitoring Your Symptoms

In addition to monitoring your weight and living a healthy lifestyle, it is important to regularly check your symptoms. In general, a worsening of your symptoms is a sign that you should see a doctor, as it could mean that your medications need to be adjusted. Use the following Quick Symptom Checker to gauge your symptoms on a daily basis.

Quick Symptom Checker

Great! Keep up the good work!							
	☐ No new or worsening shortness of breath	☐ Physical activity level is normal for you	☐ No new swelling, feet and legs look normal for you	☐ Weight check stable Weight: ____	☐ No sign of chest pain		
Warning! Watch your symptoms carefully and make an appointment to see your doctor.							
	☐ Dry, hacking cough	☐ Worsening shortness of breath with activity	☐ Increased swelling of legs, feet, and ankles	☐ Sudden weight gain of more than 2-3 lbs in a 24 hour period (or 5 lbs in a week)	☐ Discomfort or swelling in the abdomen	☐ Trouble Sleeping	
Alert! See a doctor or call 911 right away.							
	☐ Frequent dry, hacking cough	☐ Shortness of breath at rest	☐ Increased discomfort or swelling in the lower body	☐ Sudden weight gain of more than 2-3 lbs in a 24 hour period (or 5 lbs in a week)	☐ New or worsening dizziness, confusion, sadness or depression	☐ Loss of appetite	☐ Increased trouble sleeping; cannot lie flat