HEART STRONG:
Living Better With Heart Failure

5 Simple Steps to Help you Live Better With Heart Failure

- Weigh yourself daily
- Monitor how you feel
- Eat low-salt foods
- Take your medicines
- Get moving
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Section 1

What is heart failure?

Heart failure occurs when the heart can not pump enough oxygen-rich blood through your body causing important organs to receive less blood. Because the heart is not pumping well, fluid backs up into your lungs and other parts of your body. This can cause you to feel short of breath, tired, and have swelling in your feet, ankles, hands, and stomach.

Types of heart failure

**Diastolic (poor filling):** When the lower heart chambers are stiff and not able to fill properly, your heart can not pump enough blood to the rest of the body. Your heart's pumping strength (ejection fraction or EF) may be normal (55-70%) or even high.

**Systolic (weak pumping):** When the heart muscle is weak, it can not squeeze with enough force to get the blood throughout the body. Your heart's pumping strength (ejection fraction or EF) is usually less than 40%.

My type of heart failure is: ______________________________________________________

My ejection fraction is: __________________________________________________________

The most common cause of heart failure is coronary artery disease. Other causes and risk factors include:

- Weakness of the heart muscle
- High blood pressure
- Heart valve problems
- High cholesterol
- Diabetes
- Smoking
- Overactive thyroid
- Abnormal heart beat
- Overuse of alcohol and abuse of other drugs or substances
- Virus infections in the blood

The cause of My heart failure is: __________________________________________________
Heart Failure

Normal Heart

Diastolic Heart Failure (Poor Filling)
- Heart not able to fill properly
- Lower heart chambers are stiff

Systolic Heart Failure (Weak Pumping)
- Heart muscle is weak
- Heart cannot squeeze with enough force to get blood through body
**Daily Weights**

Weigh yourself EVERY day.
Because your heart cannot pump as well, extra fluids can build up in your body.

**Extra fluid can:**
- Make it harder to breathe
- Cause you to swell
- Cause your weight to go up

If you catch the weight gain early, you can take action and avoid the need to come to the hospital.

**When should I weigh?**
- First thing in the morning after you urinate
- Before you get dressed
- Before you eat breakfast
- On the same scale, EVERY day

**My target weight range is:** ______________________________

**What do I do if I gain weight?** (*remember this is water weight and not fat*)
Follow the plan that has been developed for you. Call your doctor’s office if you gain 3 pounds overnight or 5 pounds in 1 week.

**Remember to:**
- Write your weights down – keep a record or log
- Be sure your scale is on a flat, hard surface
- Keep your scale adjusted to zero
- Follow your plan for a weight gain of 3 pounds overnight or 5 pounds in 1 week.
  If you are unsure of what to do, call your doctor’s office
Symptoms of Heart Failure, Heart Failure Action Plan

How do you feel?

Common symptoms of Heart Failure include the following, you may have had some or all of these symptoms at some point:

- **Shortness of breath**: may be all the time, only with activities, or may wake you during the night
- **Trouble sleeping**: need to prop yourself up on 2 or more pillows to sleep comfortably
- **Dry, hacking cough**: most often when laying down
- **Sudden weight gain**: 3 pounds overnight or 5 pounds in 1 week
- **Swelling**: in your feet, ankles, hands or stomach
- **Feeling too tired**: for normal activities even though you get plenty of rest
- **Loss of appetite**
- **Chest discomfort, heaviness or pain**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Green Zone</th>
<th>Yellow Zone</th>
<th>Red Zone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>This is where you want to be</strong></td>
<td><strong>Call your doctor’s office today!</strong></td>
<td><strong>Call 911 if you have one or more</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- No shortness of breath or trouble breathing
- No weight gain
- No change in activity level
- No swelling in feet, ankles, hands or stomach
- No chest discomfort, heaviness or pain

- If you have one or more of the following:
  - Weight gain of 3 pounds overnight or 5 pounds in 1 week
  - More swelling in your feet, ankles, hands or stomach
  - Difficulty breathing when lying down, you need to sit up
  - Shortness of breath with activity
  - Chest discomfort, heaviness or pain

- You are struggling to breathe, even when you sit up
- You have stronger and more regular chest tightness or discomfort
- You have new confusion or can’t think clearly
- You faint or almost faint
Eat a Low-Salt Diet

Salt is also known as sodium. It causes your body to hold fluid, which causes you to gain weight. People with heart failure should limit the sodium in their diet to 2,000 mg (2 grams) per day.

Removing salt from your diet can also help prevent and lower high blood pressure.

Read the food labels

Understanding the Nutrition Facts on food labels can help you keep track of how much sodium is in the food you eat.

Always:

- Read the food labels
- Pay attention to the serving size
- Pay attention to the mgs per serving
- Choose low sodium foods (less than 140 mg per serving)

Be a smart shopper

- Buy fresh, frozen, or no-salt-added canned vegetables
- Avoid canned soups, V8® drinks, spaghetti sauce
- Choose food packed in water instead of broth or salt
- Buy fresh garlic, Mrs. Dash®, or other salt-free spice blends to season food
- Choose food labeled low-sodium, sodium-free or no-salt-added
- Eat fresh vegetables and fruit instead of salty snacks
- Avoid meats that are high in sodium, such as bologna, ham, hot dogs and sausage
- Stay away from fast food, take out, fried foods, pizza, Chinese food

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nutrition Facts</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Serving Size:</strong> 1/2 cup</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Servings Per Container:</strong> about 4</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Amount Per Serving</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Calories</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Fat</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Saturated Fat</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Trans Fat</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Cholesterol</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sodium</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Carbohydrate</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Dietary Fiber</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sugars</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Protein</strong></td>
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</table>
Choose these foods:

- Lean, fresh meat
- Fresh fruits and vegetables
- Low-fat, fresh dairy
- Eggs and fish
- Whole grains

Eat better at home

- Remove the salt shaker from the table
- Do not add salt to water when cooking beans, rice, pasta and vegetables
- Limit canned foods, but if you choose to eat canned foods, choose low-sodium or no added salt options and be sure to drain and rinse the food very well before eating
- Season food with herbs and salt-free spices instead of adding salt as you are cooking
- Instead of salt, use black pepper, paprika, cayenne pepper, cumin, dried oregano, basil or bay leaves
- Do not use kosher salt, seasoned salt, sea salt, Himalayan salt or natural salt as they contain high amounts of sodium
- Do not use salt substitutes as many contain potassium chloride in place of sodium chloride which in excess may be harmful for some people
- Avoid mustard, ketchup and mayo

Make healthy choices when you eat out

- Ask for your food to be cooked and prepared without added salt
- Order food that is baked, broiled or steamed, never fried
- Choose fruits and vegetables as side items instead of fried items like french fries
- Avoid cheese and butter
- Use lemon juice, olive oil and vinegar instead of salad dressing
- Request that sauces and salad dressings be served “on the side”

My daily sodium limit is: ______________________________________________________________
Section 5

Limit Your Fluids

Many people with Heart Failure need to limit how much fluid they are taking in. Your doctor may tell you to have no more than 2 liters (64 oz.) of fluids per day. Keep in mind fluid includes all drinks, Jell-O®, ice cream, soups, gravies, sauces, ice chips, or other liquids consumed in foods.

My daily fluid limit is: ______________________________________________________________

Section 6

Medications

Your medicine can help you feel better, live longer and reduce your chances of being readmitted to the hospital.

You should:

- Ask questions about your medicines
- Bring all your medicine bottles and your pill box to every clinic visit, emergency room visit, or hospital visit
- Always carry an up to date list of your medicines and the doses
- Make sure you refill and pick up your medications at the pharmacy before you run out. If needed, contact your pharmacy or doctor’s office to request additional refills

Be sure to take your medicines as scheduled by your doctor.
**Medications (continued)**

**My Prescriptions:** How they help me and what I need to watch for

<table>
<thead>
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<th>How they help me:</th>
<th>Common Side Effects:</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Diuretics (Water Pills)</strong></td>
<td>• Dizziness, low blood pressure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Get rid of the extra fluid, makes you pee more</td>
<td>• Lower potassium and sodium levels in your body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Make it easier for you to breathe and can help reduce and prevent swelling</td>
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**My Medications:**

**Angiotensin Converting Enzyme (ACE) Inhibitor or Angiotension Receptor Blocker (ARB)**

- Widen blood vessels
- Lower your blood pressure
- Improve pumping action of the heart

- Dry cough that does not go away and low blood pressure
- Increase in your potassium level

**Call your doctor's office if you have:** Lip tingling or swelling

**My Medications:**

**Angiotensin Receptor-Neprilysin Inhibitor (ARNI)**

- Lowers fluid build up
- Widens blood vessels
- Lowers the risk of death and hospitalization in patients with certain types of heart failure

- Low blood pressure
- Dry cough that does not go away
- Dizziness

**My Medications:**

**Beta Blockers**

- Slow the heart rate
- Improve the pumping action of the heart

- Heart rate too slow and blood pressure too low
- Tired feeling (normal at first)

**Call your doctor's office if you have:** Wheezing while on a beta blocker

**My Medications:**

**Aldosterone Blocker**

- Get rid of the extra fluid, makes you urinate more
- Improve the pumping action of the heart
- Lower blood pressure
- Can help reduce swelling

- Dizziness, low blood pressure
- Increased potassium levels

**My Medications:**

**Hydralazine and Isosorbide**

- Widen blood vessels
- May be used with patients who cannot take an ACE-inhibitor or an ARB

- Headaches when first starting to take this medicine.
- Use acetaminophen (Tylenol®) until your body adjusts

**Call your doctor's office if you have:** A severe headache that will not go away

**My Medications:**

**Digoxin**

- Help the heart pump stronger
- Can help treat heart rhythm problems

- **Call your doctor's office if you feel:** Nausea, blurred vision, confusion, or irregular heartbeat

**My Medications:**
Section 7

Exercise

Getting your body moving can help you feel better and can give you more energy. Focus on activities that can make your heart pump stronger and increase circulation, like:

- Walking
- Yard work and gardening
- Shopping
- Household chores – dusting, vacuuming, and sweeping
- Climbing stairs
- Biking
- Jogging

Be as active as you can.

- Start with 5 minutes at a time, work up to 30 minutes a day
- Break up activities, do some in the morning and some in the afternoon
- Start with 3 days per week and work up to 5 or more days per week

Stick with it, it will get easier with time.

- Pace yourself, start slow
- Stop and rest when you need to
- Do activities you enjoy
- Find an exercise partner for motivation

My daily activity goal is: __________________________________________________________

If you develop chest pain, feel short of breath, dizzy, or lightheaded, STOP exercising. If you don’t feel better call 911. If you feel better after rest, call your doctor’s office and tell the nurse you had symptoms with exercise.
Section 8

Stop Smoking

The use of ANY tobacco products will cause the arteries in your body to tighten and will cause your heart to work harder.

Smoking makes it harder to breathe.

It is important to stop smoking and stay away from others who are smoking.

New Hanover Regional Medical Center offers an evening class to help you quit smoking.

Call 910.667.8297 for more information.

More information on quitting tobacco can also be found at:

- Smokefree.gov
- ncquitnow.com
- quitnow.net
- 1-800-quitnow

You can also talk to your pharmacist about ways to quit.

Section 9

Take Care of Your Heart

EVERY day:

1. Weigh yourself in the morning before breakfast and write down your weight.
2. Look for swelling in your feet, ankles, hands or stomach.
3. Eat low-salt foods. Do not eat more than 2,000 mg of salt each day.
4. Keep your fluid intake within the limits that your doctor has set for you.
5. Take your medication exactly how your doctor told you to take it.
6. Balance your daily activities with exercise and rest.
7. Call your doctor’s office for any new or worsening symptoms. Keep all follow-up appointments for doctor visits or blood tests.
Section 10

Resources to Learn More

The more you know about heart failure, the better you will take care of yourself.

- New Hanover Regional Medical Center health information section
  - [www.nhrmc.org/heart](http://www.nhrmc.org/heart)
- Ask about **FREE** Heart Failure patient education classes available in your area.
- American Association of Heart Failure Nurses' Patient education site
  - [www.aahfnpatienteducation.com](http://www.aahfnpatienteducation.com)
  - To access the AAHFN Patient Education Heartline, dial **856.539.9006**
- Heart Failure Society of America
  - [www.hfsa.org](http://www.hfsa.org)
  - Consider enrolling in a Cardiac or Pulmonary Rehabilitation program by calling **910.662.9500**.
Section 11

Living With Heart Failure Review

Day 1/Week 1

1. Do you weigh yourself every day? Yes__________ No __________

2. What do you do with your weight? ______________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________

3. How do you know if your heart failure is getting worse? ______________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________

4. What do you do when your heart failure is getting worse? ______________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________

Day 2/Week 2

5. How many doses of medicines do you miss in a week? ____________________

6. What problems do you have getting your medicines? ______________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________

Day 3/Week 3

7. How many times a week do you eat out? ____________________

8. How many times a week do you eat packaged or canned foods? ____________________

9. What is your daily sodium limit? ____________________

10. How active are you at home? What do you like to do? ______________________________________________________________________
       ______________________________________________________________________
Test how much you know!

Day 1/Week 1

1. When are you going to weigh yourself? ____________________________________________
2. Where do you record your weight? ________________________________________________
3. How do you know if your heart failure is getting worse? __________________________
4. If you gain 3 pounds overnight or 5 pounds in a week, what will you do? ____________
5. When do you call 911? __________________________________________________________

Day 2/Week 2

6. What is your fluid pill and how often should you take it? ___________________________
7. Which of your medicines make you live longer? _________________________________

Day 3/Week 3

8. Name one diet change you are going to make. _________________________________
9. What is your daily sodium limit? ________________________________
10. Name one thing you are going to do to get moving. ____________________________
11. What are some signs that you should STOP what you are doing and rest? __________

Heart Strong