

Chronic Heart Failure Action Plan

KNOW WHEN TO CALL YOUR DOCTOR OR SEEK HELP

GREEN ZONE: All Clear

Your heart failure is in good control if:

- ♥ No shortness of breath
- ♥ No swelling
- ♥ No weight gain
- ♥ No chest pain
- ♥ No decrease in your ability to maintain your activity level

Green Zone Means:

- ♥ Your symptoms are under control
- ♥ Continue taking your medications as ordered
- ♥ Continue daily weights
- ♥ Continue to follow a 2-3 gram sodium restricted diet
- ♥ Keep all physician appointments

YELLOW ZONE: Caution

- ♥ Weight gain of 2 or more pounds overnight
- ♥ Increased cough
- ♥ Increased swelling in your legs and/or tummy
- ♥ Increased shortness of breath with activity
- ♥ Decreased ability to breathe when lying flat
- ♥ Increased number of pillows needed to elevate head when lying down
- ♥ Decrease in your ability to maintain your activity level

Yellow Zone Means:

- ♥ Your symptoms may indicate that you need an adjustment of your medications
- ♥ Take diuretic medication as directed
- ♥ If your symptoms or weight do not improve with extra diuretic medication **CALL** one of the following:

Physician _____

Nurse _____

Community Care Nurse _____

RED ZONE: Medical Alert

- ♥ Unrelieved shortness of breath and/or shortness of breath **at rest**
- ♥ Unrelieved chest pain
- ♥ Wheezing or chest tightness at rest
- ♥ Need to sit in chair to sleep
- ♥ Weight gain of over 2 pounds overnight or more than 5 pounds in one week
- ♥ Confusion

Red Zone Means:

- ♥ You need to be evaluated by a physician right away
- ♥ Go to the nearest emergency room department **OR**
- ♥ Call 911
- ♥ Call your physician immediately if you are entering the red zone



Heart Failure Management Guide

1. SALT RESTRICTED DIET:

Salt is like a sponge, it keeps extra fluid in your body. Your heart has to work harder to pump this extra fluid. A salt restriction of 2300 mg daily is strongly encouraged (1 tsp. = approximately 2300 mg or 2.3 g of sodium). Watch for high sodium foods.

Recommendations:

- Do not use salt when cooking
- Remove the salt shaker from the table
- To season food, use herbs and spices instead of salt
- Read food labels. Look for the words salt, sodium, Na, NaCl. If these words are listed in the first five ingredients, it means there is a lot of salt in the product.
- If the label reads ≤ 200 mg per serving it is an acceptable choice for you.
- Stay away from these foods because they have a lot of salt: Lunch meats; cheese; canned foods like soups and tomatoes; bacon; salted nuts, crackers, and party snacks; barbeque sauce, packaged salad dressings, ketchup, and soya sauce; convenience foods like frozen dinners; pickles
- Ask your healthcare provider if you can use salt substitutes made with potassium. These are not good for everyone.

Please refer to the salt specific handouts.

2. WEIGHT MONITORING:

Sudden weight gain can be an early sign of fluid build up. Watch for a weight increase of **2 lbs (1kg) or more overnight or 5 lbs (3kg) or more in one week**. Call the family physician or nurse if this happens or we may advise you how to take extra diuretic (water pill) as directed:

Be sure to weigh yourself every morning and remember the following:

- Empty your bladder first
- Wear the same amount of clothing every time you weigh yourself
- Weigh yourself before breakfast
- Record your weight

3. ACTIVITY:

Walk 3-5 days a week or continue with your current regime if equivalent to the following:

Goal: 150 minutes per week (e.g. 30 minutes per day, 5 times per week)

Start: 5-10 minutes for 1-2 weeks (week 1-2) 15-20 minutes for 1-2 weeks (week 5-6)
10-15 minutes for 1-2 weeks (week 3-4) 20-30 minutes for 1-2 weeks (week 7-8)

- Start slow, progress gradually
- If unusually tired or ill, don't exercise
- Be active
- Plan ahead.
- Doesn't need to be hard or continuous to be beneficial. May do 15 min. in a.m. and 15 min. in p.m.
- Stop if you experience extreme shortness of breath, chest pain, or fatigue
- Exercise before meals or 90 minutes after meals
- You should return to pre-walk or resting state within 10-15 minutes of completing exercise
- Walk in familiar areas with a friend
- Remember to use the 'talk test' to pace yourself
- Build a rest period into your day
- Set priorities.

4. MONITORING - MONITOR YOURSELF FOR SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF HEART FAILURE:

- Increased shortness of breath with activity, at rest, or when lying down
- Waking at night with shortness of breath
- Bloating of your tummy
- Cough
- Heart racing/pounding
- Chest pain
- Swelling of your feet/ankles
- Decreased appetite
- Fatigue
- Weakness
- Weight gain

5. MEDICATIONS:

You will be on several medications to help you with proper treatment. It is important that you are on medication doses that provide the greatest benefit. You can expect frequent changes to achieve these doses. Medication changes will only occur if you are stable enough to do so - this is a positive step. Do not skip medication doses unless instructed to do so. You will be taking medications that **may** make you experience a sensation of fleeting light-headedness, especially with position changes.

Call your doctor or nurse immediately if you experience:

- Loss of balance because of light-headedness
- Black dots or total blackness in your visual field
- Any episode of unconsciousness or fainting
- Some medications cause fluid retention, and therefore are not recommended for people with heart failure. Please be cautious with:
 - Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications (Ibuprofen, Motrin, Advil, Celebrex, Indocid)
 - Antacids and laxatives (Maalox, Ex-lax)
 - Select diabetic medications (Avandia, Actos)
- Check with your pharmacist before you buy any non-prescription medications
- Some herbal remedies can interfere negatively with your treatment. Please notify your physician/nurse if you are taking any herbal therapies.

6. MENTAL WELL-BEING:

Living with chronic illness can be difficult. Chronic illness may cause changes in mood, work, relationships and/or finances. You may require additional support that we are able to assist you with.

7. SEXUAL WELL-BEING:

Sometimes chronic illness and fatigue can change how you mentally and physically approach intimacy. These changes may cause stress and uneasiness for you and your partner. There are physiological reasons why your body changes in response to intimacy. There are options to consider that do help. Please feel free to discuss this with your health care provider.

**Please refer to the back of this guide
for information on when to call your doctor or ask for help**

