

# Congestive Heart Failure

From Heart Failure to Heart Success



Health  
System

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# Understanding Heart Failure

## What is Congestive Heart Failure (CHF)?

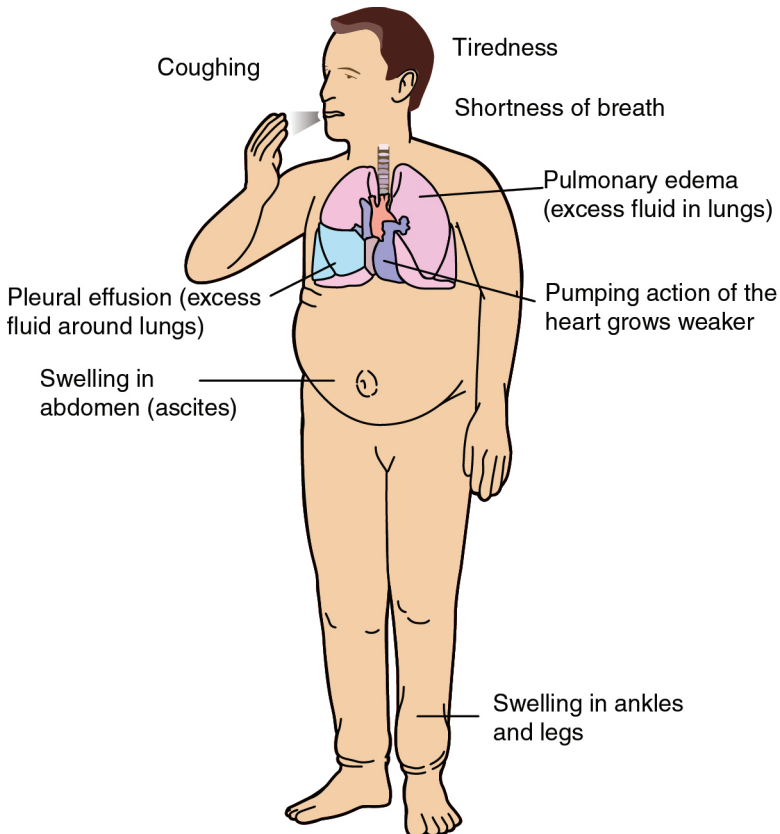
Heart failure does not mean that the heart has stopped, but that the heart cannot pump the blood well. Better control of your blood pressure and diabetes will help your heart pump more easily.

## What can it be caused by?

- Heart attack
- Leaky valves in your heart
- High blood pressure
- Diabetes

## What might I feel?

- Short of breath
- Swollen in the belly or legs
- Not as hungry or can not eat as much
- Urge to cough
- Tired
- Dizzy
- Chest pain



# How to live well with Heart Failure

## *When to call for help*

### **Call 9-1-1 for help if you experience:**

- Chest discomfort or pain that lasts more than 15 minutes and does not improve with nitroglycerin or rest.
- Severe, continuing shortness of breath
- Fainting or passing out
- Waking up suddenly struggling to breathe

### **Call your doctor right away if you:**

- Have a harder time breathing than normal
- Have new shortness of breath while resting
- Cannot sleep because you cannot breathe well
- Need to sleep sitting up or using more pillows than usual to breathe well
- Have fast or funny heart beats that do not stop and/or make you feel dizzy
- Cough up foamy white fluid
- Feel like you may pass out
- Gain more than three pounds in one day or five pounds in one week





## *Daily weight monitoring*

### **It is important to monitor your weight.**

- Weight gain is the first sign that your heart failure may be getting worse.
- Patients can gain up to 10 pounds of “extra” weight from fluid before feeling bad or swelling.

### **Weigh daily...**

- at the same time in the morning, after you urinate (pee).
- while wearing what you sleep in, before eating or drinking.
- using the same scale on a flat, hard surface.

After weighing, write your weight down on the weight log provided on the inside back cover of this booklet and compare it to your dry weight (your weight on the day you are sent home from the hospital).

**If you gain more than three pounds in one day or five pounds in one week, call your doctor.**

## *Heart Failure Zones*

### **ALL CLEAR – GREEN ZONE**


- NO shortness of breath
- NO weight gain of more than 2 lbs. in 1 day (weight may change 1-2 lbs. in a day)
- NO swelling in the feet, ankles, legs or abdomen
- NO chest pain
- NO other significant symptoms

### **CAUTION – YELLOW ZONE (CALL YOUR DOCTOR)**

- 3 pound weight gain in 1 day OR 5 pound weight gain in 1 week
- MORE shortness of breath
- You need to sleep upright in a chair in order to breathe
- MORE swelling in the feet, ankles, legs or abdomen
- Dry, hacking cough
- Feeling MORE tired than usual
- Dizziness
- Feeling uneasy...you know that something isn't right

### **EMERGENCY – RED ZONE (SEEK HELP NOW, CALL 9-1-1)**

- Struggling to breathe
- Unrelieved shortness of breath while sitting still
- Experiencing chest pain
- Have confusion or can't think clearly



## ***Heart Failure medications***

Most people with heart failure will need more than 3 medicines. You may be given any of the following medicines.

### **Ace, ARBs and ARNIs**

What they do:

- Lower blood pressure
- Make it easier for the heart to pump

Possible side effects:

- Low blood pressure (may make you feel dizzy)
- Dry cough
- Swelling of mouth, lips or tongue (call your doctor immediately)

### **Aldosterone Receptor Antagonists**

What they do:

- A water pill that helps get rid of salt and fluid while keeping potassium

Possible side effects:

- Increased potassium
- Low blood pressure
- Gynecomastia – overgrowth of breast in men

## Beta-Blockers

What they do:

- Lower blood pressure and slow down heart rate
- May strengthen the heart's pumping action over time

Possible side effects:

- Low blood pressure (may make you feel dizzy)
- Low heart rate
- Tiredness
- Erectile dysfunction

## Diuretics (Water Pills)

What they do:

- Help get rid of water through urination (peeing), which will help you breathe better and have less swelling

Possible side effects:

- Low blood pressure (may make you feel dizzy)
- High blood sugar
- Gout

## Hydralazine and Nitrates

What they do:

- Together, they open veins and arteries so the heart does not have to pump as hard.

Possible side effects:

- Low blood pressure
- Rash, fever, joint pain, swelling

## Potassium

What it does:

- An electrolyte your body needs to function properly
- You can have too much or too little potassium which can be caused by some medications. Always have your labs drawn as your doctor orders.

Possible side effects:

- Muscle weakness
- Funny heart beats

## Avoid the following over-the-counter medicines:

- Aleve (Naproxen Sodium)
- Advil (Ibuprofen)
- Alka-Seltzer
- Antacids high in sodium
- Herbal medicines unless prescribed by a cardiologist
- Sudafed

Tylenol can be used if it's okay with your doctor.

**Please note:** This list of side effects is not all inclusive. Please refer to the package insert and notify your physician if side effects occur. Please be compliant with any labs or testing ordered to monitor drug effects.





### **How to be successful with medications:**

- Take all of your medicines as instructed by your doctor or pharmacist
- Do not skip doses unless instructed by your doctor
- Bring all your medicines with you to all appointments in their original prescription bottles
- Tell your doctor about any herbal medicines you are taking
- Make sure you have enough medicine to last until your next refill
- Let your doctor know if you can not afford your medication



### *How to eat less salt (sodium)*

Salt, also called sodium, is found in many foods. Heart Failure patients should not eat a lot of salt. Salt acts like a sponge—soaking up fluid and holding it in your body. This extra fluid can make it harder for you to breathe, or make your feet and belly swell. Too much salt can also make your medicine less effective.

A low-sodium diet contains no more than 2,000 mg of sodium per day. Follow these tips to lower the salt in your diet.

- Take the salt shaker off the table.
- Do not add salt when cooking.
- Use herbs or spices to flavor food, not salt.
- Choose spice mixes that say *NO SALT ADDED* or *UNSALTED*.
- Avoid any seasoning with the word “salt” in the name.
- Avoid potassium-based salt like NoSalt or NuSalt

### **Pick foods naturally low in sodium.**

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

## *How much can I drink a day?*

### **Drinking too much fluid will cause:**

- Weight gain
- Shortness of breath
- Swelling
- Medicines will not work as well

### **FLUID MEASUREMENTS**

8 cups = 64 oz. = 2,000 mL = 2 liters

Think about a 2 liter soda bottle as your guide to most fluid you should have in one day.

#### **To measure fluid intake**

- Use a 2 liter bottle
- When drinking fluid or anything that counts as liquid, pour that amount of water into the bottle
- When the bottle is full, you cannot have any more fluid for the day

#### **To measure ice intake**

- Put the same amount of ice that you will eat or drink into your bottle and let it melt

#### **What is considered a fluid?**

- Anything you drink
- Jello, pudding, yogurt
- Fluid in soups
- Watermelon
- Anything that can melt down to liquid (ice, popsicles, ice cream)

### **Tips for a dry mouth**

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

## Nutrition Facts

Serving Size 1/2 cup (120g)  
Servings Per Container About 3.5

### Amount Per Serving

**Calories** 20      Calories from Fat 0

**% Daily Value\***

**Total Fat** 0g      **0%**

Saturated Fat 0g      **0%**

Trans Fat 0g

**Cholesterol** 0mg      **0%**

**Sodium** 30mg      **1%**

**Total Carbohydrate** 4g      **1%**

Dietary Fiber 2g      **8%**

Sugars 2g

**Protein** less than 1g

Vitamin A 4%      •      Vitamin C 4%

Calcium 2%      •      Iron 0%

\*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet.

### Learning to read food labels

By reading food labels, you can learn which foods are high and low in sodium.

In general, the more a food is processed, the more sodium it contains.

### Reading a food label

Always check the serving size and look at the amount of sodium per serving. This example has 30 mg of sodium in a 1/2 cup and is a good choice. Try to limit the salt to 140 mg or less per serving of food.

### Choose items that are labeled:

- Low sodium
- No salt added
- Sodium free

## Foods - what I should and should not eat

### Things you should not eat

- Bacon, sausage and ham
- Fried foods
- Butter, cheese, sauces and salad dressing

### Things you can eat

- Grilled chicken and fish
- Grilled, baked or steamed foods
- Oil and vinegar in place of salad dressing

## GREEN

These foods are low in sodium, choose them more often.

- Yeast breads
- Most cold cereals
- Pasta, rice, oats packaged without salt
- Fresh or frozen vegetables
- Fresh, frozen, or canned fruit
- Skim or 1% milk
- Yogurt
- Mozzarella, Parmesan or Swiss cheese
- Fresh meat (chicken, beef, fish)
- Eggs

## YELLOW

These foods can be chosen when the label states **NO SALT ADDED**, **UNSALTED** or **LOW SODIUM**.

- Bread crumbs
- Canned vegetables
- Canned soup
- Frozen meals
- Salsa
- Ketchup, salad dressings, other condiments
- Worcestershire sauce

## RED

These foods are high in sodium and should be chosen least often.

- Breads/crackers topped with salt
- Biscuits, cornbread, quick breads made with baking soda
- Frozen vegetables with sauce
- Pickles
- Sauerkraut or other pickled vegetables
- Buttermilk
- Processed cheese and other cheeses
- Processed meats (deli meat, bacon, sausage,)
- Canned processed meats (deviled ham, Vienna sausages, chili)
- Salted butter or margarine
- Bouillon cubes
- Most sauces (soy sauce, Dale's sauce, BBQ sauce)
- Olives

## *Smoking and alcohol*

### **Quit smoking**

Smoking can make Heart Failure worse. If you want to quit, some successful ideas to help you stop smoking are:

**S** = Set a start date

**T** = Tell family, friends and coworkers you are going to quit

**A** = Ahead of time, plan for what will be hard

**R** = Remove cigarettes/tobacco 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<sup>®</sup> classes, an eight-week tobacco cessation program of the American Lung Association. Call (256) 265-7071 for information.

### **Avoid alcohol**

Alcohol can be harmful for patients with heart failure, so it is best to discuss your drinking with your doctor. Any alcohol (beer, wine, liquor, moonshine) must be added to your fluids for the day.

## *Daily life with Heart Failure*

### **Activity goals**

- Be physically active 30 minutes a day for most days of the week.
- Break it into 10 minutes of activity 3 times per day.

### **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.

### **Signs you are overdoing it**

Slow down or stop if any of these happen while you are active:

- Shortness of breath that prevents you from completing a sentence
- Shortness of breath that doesn't get better within 5–10 minutes of stopping the activity
- Dizziness or lightheadedness lasting longer than 10–15 minutes

If you have any of these symptoms while being active, slow down. If the symptoms do not get better, stop the activity. **Call 9-1-1 if your chest pain or other symptoms are not relieved.**

## **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 sex.
- 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.

## **Advance directives**

With any chronic disease, it is a good idea to complete an advance directive, which allows you to clearly state your medical wishes. Think about what type of treatment you would want or not want if you couldn't speak for yourself due to a serious decline in your health. For example, would you want a breathing tube if you weren't able to breathe well on your own? Would you want chest compressions if your heart stopped? Your health care team wants to follow your wishes, so if you have medical preferences, please let us know! Preparing an advance directive can help reduce stress for yourself, your caregivers and loved ones. Request to speak with an Advance Care Plan Facilitator to learn more or to receive help with completing an advance directive.

## **Depression**

- Seeing a counselor can help you with some of your worries and make you feel better.
- Follow your exercise or activity plan doing things you enjoy.
- Get a good night's sleep.
- Tell your doctor if you have any feelings of anxiousness, hopelessness, sadness or “empty” mood; if you are irritable, restless or lack energy.

**National Suicide Hotline: 1-800-273-8255**

**SPEAK** (*Suicide Prevention Empowerment Awareness Knowledge*) **app:**  
**[huntsvillehospitalfoundation.org/speak-suicide-prevention](https://huntsvillehospitalfoundation.org/speak-suicide-prevention)**

# Bringing It All Together

## *6 steps to Heart Failure success*

### **1. Weigh every day.**

- Weight at the same time, first thing in the morning.
- Go to the bathroom and urinate (pee) before weighing.
- Weigh in the clothes you sleep in, write down your weight and compare it to your dry weight.
- Call your doctor if you gain more than 3 pounds in a day or 5 pounds in a week.

### **2. Take your medicines as listed on 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 make sure you do not run out.
- Taking your diabetes and blood pressure medicine as directed will also help you manage your Heart Failure.

### **3. Limit salt and fluids.**

- Read food labels.
- Don't add any salt to your foods either while preparing or while eating.
- Keep total fluids to 2 liters.

### **4. Follow your activity program.**

- Moving will help you have more energy and feel better .
- Start slow and stop exercising if you feel chest pain, become dizzy or so short of breath you can not finish a sentence.
- Speak with your doctor about resuming sexual activity.

### **5. Know when to get help.**

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

### **6. Keep all your medical appointments.**

- Bring your medications and weight log each time you visit the doctor.
- Follow through with lab draws or other ordered tests.



## Resources

**American Heart Association**  
[heart.org/](http://heart.org/)

**CASA**  
(256) 533-7775

Specializes in winterizing homes, transportation (age 60+), ramps, grab bars (not age dependent) and donated medical equipment.

**Community Free Clinic**  
410 Sivley Road SW  
Huntsville, AL 35801  
(256) 533-2910  
[hsvfreeclinic.org](http://hsvfreeclinic.org)

Provides free health care, education and medications to people in Madison County without health care benefits.

**Mobile Medical Unit**  
(256) 265-8317

Provides free health screenings throughout Madison County.

### **HH Cardiac Rehab**

Cardiac Rehab is a medically supervised program designed to slow, or even reverse the progression of Heart Disease reducing risk of another cardiac event. Services offered include personal rehabilitation plans education and counseling supervised exercise.

### **HH Congestive Heart Failure Clinic**

Provides outpatient care to individuals with varying stages of Heart Failure. Care is performed in collaboration with the Medical Director, Primary Cardiologist, a multi-disciplinary team of clinical providers and the patient to include his/her support members.

**National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute**  
[nhlbi.nih.gov/health/health-topics/topics/hf](http://nhlbi.nih.gov/health/health-topics/topics/hf)

**Senior RX**  
100 North Side Square  
Huntsville, AL 35801  
(256) 532-3345

Offers seniors (age 55+) assistance with medication and transportation.

**TARCOG**  
(256) 830-0818

Elder services (extended care)

### **Sources for this publication:**

- Huntsville Hospital Congestive Heart Failure Clinic
- Heart Failure Society of America

# Daily Weight Log

Goal (dry weight): \_\_\_\_\_

Take this log with you when you visit your doctor.

<b>DAY 1</b>	Date:	Weight:
	<b>ZONE</b> Circle One: <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	

<b>DAY 2</b>	Date:	Weight:
	<b>ZONE</b> Circle One: <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	

<b>DAY 3</b>	Date:	Weight:
	<b>ZONE</b> Circle One: <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	

<b>DAY 4</b>	Date:	Weight:
	<b>ZONE</b> Circle One: <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	

<b>DAY 5</b>	Date:	Weight:
	<b>ZONE</b> Circle One: <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	

<b>DAY 6</b>	Date:	Weight:
	<b>ZONE</b> Circle One: <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	

<b>DAY 7</b>	Date:	Weight:
	<b>ZONE</b> Circle One: <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	

<b>DAY 8</b>	Date:	Weight:
	<b>ZONE</b> Circle One: <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	

<b>DAY 9</b>	Date:	Weight:
	<b>ZONE</b> Circle One: <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	

<b>DAY 10</b>	Date:	Weight:
	<b>ZONE</b> Circle One: <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	

<b>DAY 11</b>	Date:	Weight:
	<b>ZONE</b> Circle One: <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	

<b>DAY 12</b>	Date:	Weight:
	<b>ZONE</b> Circle One: <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	

<b>DAY 13</b>	Date:	Weight:
	<b>ZONE</b> Circle One: <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	

<b>DAY 14</b>	Date:	Weight:
	<b>ZONE</b> Circle One: <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	

<b>DAY 15</b>	Date:	Weight:
	<b>ZONE</b> Circle One:   	

<b>DAY 16</b>	Date:	Weight:
	<b>ZONE</b> Circle One:   	

<b>DAY 17</b>	Date:	Weight:
	<b>ZONE</b> Circle One:   	

<b>DAY 18</b>	Date:	Weight:
	<b>ZONE</b> Circle One:   	

<b>DAY 19</b>	Date:	Weight:
	<b>ZONE</b> Circle One:   	

<b>DAY 20</b>	Date:	Weight:
	<b>ZONE</b> Circle One:   	

<b>DAY 21</b>	Date:	Weight:
	<b>ZONE</b> Circle One:   	

<b>DAY 22</b>	Date:	Weight:
	<b>ZONE</b> Circle One:   	

<b>DAY 23</b>	Date:	Weight:
	<b>ZONE</b> Circle One:   	

<b>DAY 24</b>	Date:	Weight:
	<b>ZONE</b> Circle One:   	

<b>DAY 25</b>	Date:	Weight:
	<b>ZONE</b> Circle One:   	

<b>DAY 26</b>	Date:	Weight:
	<b>ZONE</b> Circle One:   	

<b>DAY 27</b>	Date:	Weight:
	<b>ZONE</b> Circle One:   	

<b>DAY 28</b>	Date:	Weight:
	<b>ZONE</b> Circle One:   	

<b>DAY 29</b>	Date:	Weight:
	<b>ZONE</b> Circle One:   	

<b>DAY 30</b>	Date:	Weight:
	<b>ZONE</b> Circle One:   	

## **Heart Failure Clinic**

Blackwell Medical Tower,  
Lobby Level, Suite 300

201 Sivley Road • Huntsville, AL 35801

(256) 265-6566 phone

(256) 265-6881 fax



**HUNTSVILLE HOSPITAL**  
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### **To support this program – Please contact us!**

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(256) 265-8077 • [huntsvillehospitalfoundation.org](http://huntsvillehospitalfoundation.org)

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.