

Discharge Instructions for Heart Failure

You have been diagnosed with heart failure. The term “heart failure” sounds scary. But it doesn't mean that your heart will suddenly stop or that you are near death. It means the heart is not doing its job as well as it should. Heart failure happens when your heart muscle cannot keep up with your body's need for blood flow. Symptoms of heart failure can be controlled by changes in your lifestyle and by following your doctor's advice.

Home Care

- Maintain a healthy weight. Get help to lose any extra pounds.
- Cut back on salt.
 - Limit canned, dried, packaged, and fast foods.
 - Don't add salt to your food at the table.
 - Season foods with herbs instead of salt when you cook.
- Ask your doctor about an exercise program. You can benefit from simple activities such as walking or gardening. Don't be discouraged if your progress is slow at first.
- Break the smoking habit. Enroll in a stop-smoking program to improve your chances of success.
- Weigh yourself every day; do this at the same time of day and in the same kind of clothes.
- Rest as needed.
- Recognize that your health and even survival depend on your following medical recommendations.
- Learn to take your own pulse. Keep a record of your results. Ask your doctor which readings mean that you need medical attention.
- Learn how to take your blood pressure. If this is difficult, have a family member learn how to do it for you.
- Avoid exposure to temperature extremes, such as hot tubs and saunas.
- Keep appointments for checkups and lab tests that are needed to check your medications and condition.
- Take your medications exactly as prescribed. Don't skip doses.
- If you miss a dose of this medication, take it as soon as you remember—unless it's almost time for your next dose. In that case, just wait and take your next dose at the normal time. Don't take a double dose.

When to Call Your Doctor

Call your doctor immediately if you have any of the following:

- Trouble breathing
- Chest pain that is not relieved by medication
- Swelling in your feet and ankles
- Coughing up pink or blood-tinged sputum
- Weight gain of more than 2 pounds in 24 hours or more than 5 pounds in 1 week

Follow-Up

Make a follow-up appointment as directed by our staff.