


CONGESTIVE HEART FAILURE



HOME CARE
INSTRUCTIONS
AND
LOW SODIUM
INFORMATION

ARKANSAS HEART HOSPITAL®

YOUR HEART HOSPITAL



- **Follow a 2000 mg (or _____ mg) Sodium diet.**
 - Following this diet is one of the most important factors in controlling your Heart Failure. When buying food, learn to read the nutrition labels. If the sodium content per serving is more than 250 mg, put the food back on the shelf. Learning to cook “from scratch” instead of eating high sodium processed and pre-prepared food will decrease fluid retention and improve your ability to maintain independence and stay out of the hospital.

- **Follow a fluid restriction of 64 oz. (or _____ oz.) a day.**
 - **Remember** - anything that melts such as jello, ice cream or ice must be counted as a fluid. Everything that you drink must eventually be pumped through your heart before it goes to your kidneys. Drinking more fluid per day than what your doctor orders will put a greater strain on your heart and make it difficult for you to breathe, especially at night.



- **Weigh daily first thing in the morning and write it down on a calendar.**



- **Keep all doctors' appointments.**
 - After a hospitalization with Heart Failure, changes in your medication (especially diuretics) require close follow-up by your doctor/APN and monitoring of blood work to prevent potential problems such as heart rhythm disturbances and kidney problems.



- **Abstain from alcohol.**
 - Heart Failure patients should abstain from alcohol. Alcohol worsens Heart Failure and in some cases, large sustained amounts can even cause Heart Failure.

- **Avoid over-the-counter pain relievers.**
 - Heart Failure patients should avoid all over-the-counter pain relievers (such as Advil, Motrin, Aleve, Naproxen, Ibuprofen) except for Tylenol (acetaminophen). Also prescription Cox-2 inhibitor pain medications (such as Celebrex and Vioxx) should be avoided. These meds inhibit the action of your diuretics and can cause fluid retention which can lead to another ER visit or hospitalization.

- **Take medications exactly as ordered.**
 - After you return home, carefully compare your discharge medication list from the hospital to the medications you were taking before coming to the hospital. If you have any questions about med changes, please call your doctor.



Activity

- Do some kind of physical activity every day. Activity can make you feel better and may also decrease your symptoms and improve your heart's function.
- Learn how to balance activity with your need for rest.
- Whatever you do, take it step by step and give yourself plenty of time to adjust to being more active.
- Discontinue activities if you have shortness of breath, chest pain, dizziness, extreme fatigue, or a racing heart.

Call Your Doctor/APN for:

Signs of fluid over load:

- Weight gain of 3 pounds in a day or 3-5 pounds in a week
- Worsening edema/swelling of lower extremities or abdomen
- Worsening dry cough or coughing up clear frothy sputum
- Increased difficulty breathing when lying down
- Faster than usual heart rate/palpitations
- Worsening fatigue

Signs of dehydration:

- Weight loss of 5 pounds or more in a week that may occur with one or more of the following symptoms:
 - Increased lightheadedness, dizziness
 - Decreased blood pressure
 - Decreased urination

Smoking Cessation for Heart Failure Patients:

- Heart Failure patients that quit smoking have a 30% lower rate of death than Heart Failure patients that smoke.
- This improvement in death rates from quitting smoking is the about the same benefit that patients gain from taking important Heart Failure medications such as ACE inhibitors, beta blockers and aldosterone antagonists.
- The benefits of quitting smoking kick in within one year for Heart Failure patients (as compared to decreases in cancer risk which accrue at a slower rate).
- When tobacco addiction can be documented as a contributing factor to Heart Failure, smoking cessation therapy is often covered on a case-by-case basis by Medicare. Medicaid and private insurance vary in their coverage policies.

IT IS NEVER TOO LATE

Resources

www.aahfnpatienteducation.com (American Assoc. of HF Nurses) Patient information about all aspects of HF.

www.abouthf.org (sponsored by the Heart Failure Society of America) is directed to patients and caregivers. It addresses all aspects of Heart Failure from medications to exercise tips to new treatments for Heart Failure.

www.heartfailure.org has information in Spanish as well.

www.dietfacts.com lists sodium content of foods from common restaurants, including fast food.

www.healthyheartmarket.com is a resource for ordering low sodium and no-sodium products for cooking needs (i.e. no sodium baking powder, baking soda), condiments (low-sodium BBQ sauce), and snacks.

www.megaheart.com has low sodium recipes and many cooking tips from a chef that is also a Heart Failure patient.

Heart Failure is a challenging disease to manage. The goal of improving your quality of life and maintaining independence as much as possible requires your active involvement and cooperation. The more you know about your condition, the better you and your health care team will be able to accomplish these goals together.