

HEART FAILURE: Just the Facts

What is Heart Failure?

Congestive Heart Failure (CHF) is a weakening or thickening of the heart muscle, which decreases the amount of blood the heart can pump out with each beat. This can result in fluid buildup in the lungs, causing shortness of breath, swelling in the legs and feet, and less blood being pumped to other organs such as the kidneys.

Self-Management Skills

Weigh Yourself Daily

- Weigh yourself at home the day you are discharged.
- Weigh yourself every day right after waking up, and after emptying your bladder.
- Record your weight each day on a calendar.
- Always use the same scale, and wear the same amount of clothing.
- Call your doctor if you gain two to three pounds over two days, or four to five pounds over one week.

Follow a Low Sodium (Salt) Diet

Have no more than 2,000 mg (two grams) of sodium each day by:

- Not using a salt shaker.
- Not adding salt when cooking.
- Always reading food labels for sodium content (amount of sodium listed is based on one serving size).
- In general, avoid food that has more than 300 mg per serving.



Take Medication as Prescribed

- Know the name and dose of each medication, what it is for, and when to take it.
- Use the medication schedule in your discharge instructions to keep track of when to take your medications.
- Tell your doctor or nurse if you have problems with any of your medications.



Follow-up With Your Doctor

- Set up an appointment with your doctor within one week of your discharge, or as soon as possible.

Fluid Guidelines

- Limit your fluid intake to eight glasses filled with eight ounces of liquid per day (two quarts), or as recommended by your doctor.

Exercise

- Over time, exercise can strengthen your heart muscle. Your doctor will give you specific activity levels. Balance periods of activity with periods of rest.



If You Smoke - Quit

- Quitting smoking lowers your chances for a future heart attack, stroke and other life-shortening illness. Contact UPMC Referral Services at **1-800-533-8762**, or the PA Quit Smoking Line at **1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669)** for information on quitting smoking classes.

Call Your Doctor if You:

- Feel more short of breath.
- Feel increased fatigue or tiredness.
- Are less able to do everyday tasks.
- Gain two to three pounds over two days, or four to five pounds over one week.
- See abdominal bloating or swelling in legs or ankles.

UPMC LIFE
CHANGING
MEDICINE