

For the Patient Leaving the Hospital with a Heart Failure Diagnosis

What Is Heart Failure?

A heart failure diagnosis means that a person's heart no longer pumps blood as well as it should. One way physicians assess patients' stage of heart failure is by monitoring the heart's Ejection Fraction (EF), which measures how much blood is pushed out with each heartbeat. Heart failure can cause shortness of breath, fatigue, weakness, and swelling of the legs and feet.

What Is The Prognosis?

Once a person has been diagnosed with heart failure, they will have it for life, but can still live a full, active life.

The key is simple: patients must take their medicine every day and follow a few easy steps at home.

What Is The Treatment?

With the proper use of medications and lifestyle changes, heart failure can be successfully managed. There are four key medications that are often used to manage heart failure:

- [Heart Protector \(ARNI/ACE/ARB\)](#), helps the heart pump better
- [Heart Rate Helper \(Beta-blocker\)](#), slows the heart so it works less hard
- [Fluid Balancer \(MRA\)](#), removes extra fluids
- [SGLT2 Inhibitor](#), reduces the chance of future hospitalization

Each medication has a specific task in managing heart failure and they work best when they are taken together. For this reason, it is important that patients never skip them or stop taking medications on their own (even if they feel better) without first consulting their care team.

How Can I Prevent Returning To The Hospital Again?

The best way to prevent future hospitalizations is establishing daily routines that will ensure you are taking good care of yourself every day. Incorporate the following items into your daily routine:

Every Morning

- ☐ Weigh yourself daily
- ☐ Take all morning medications
- ☐ Check feet/ankles for swelling
- ☐ Plan low-salt meals

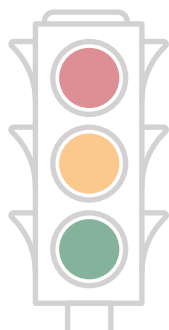
Observe Daily Limits

- ☐ **SODIUM (Salt):** should be less than 2,000 mg/day, which is approx. 1 teaspoon
- ☐ **FLUIDS:** follow guidance from your doctor about daily

Stay Active & Get Help

- ☐ Walk 20-30 minutes most days
- ☐ Rest when tired
- ☐ No smoking
- ☐ Limit alcohol

The most important thing you can do is **weigh yourself and record it every morning**. Do it at the same time each day, wearing the same kind of clothes, right after you use the bathroom. **Call your care team if you gain more than 2 pounds in one day, or more than 5 pounds in one week.** Rapid weight gain usually means extra water is building up in your body, which often happens before you feel sick. Detecting water retention early is easier to address than waiting until you feel worse.



When Should I Call For Help?

Having a plan will help you to stay calm you do not feel well. The traffic-signal plan below tells you what to watch for and what to do. Green means you are doing well, keep going. Yellow means call your care team today. Red means call 911 right now. Not sure which color you are in? Call your care team and ask.

Call 911 Immediately If:	Call Doctor Today If:	You're Doing Well If:
☐ Severe trouble breathing or can't catch your breath ☐ Chest pain that doesn't go away ☐ Fainting or passing out ☐ Confusion or can't think clearly	☐ Rapid weight gain > 2lbs in 1 day or >5lbs in 1 week ☐ More shortness of breath than usual ☐ New or worse swelling in legs, feet, or belly ☐ Need more pillows to sleep ☐ Wake up breathless at night ☐ New dizziness or lightheadedness ☐ Persistent coughing or wheezing	☐ Weight remains the same (within 2lbs) ☐ Breathing is comfortable ☐ Can do usual activities ☐ Sleeping well without extra pillows ☐ No new swelling ☐ Taking all medications as prescribed ☐ Following salt and fluid limits

Do not wait. Call as soon as you notice a warning sign. Calling early can keep a small problem from turning into a hospital stay. It is always okay to call and ask.

When Should I Call For Help?

Fill this in with your care team. That way this important information is all in one place.

My EF Number: _____ (as of ____/____/____)

- ☐ Normal: 55-70%
☐ Mildly Reduced: 41-49%
☐ Reduced: 40% or less

My Goal Weight: _____ pounds

My Daily Water/Fluid Limit: _____ a day (based on guidance from your doctor)

My Daily Salt Limit: _____ a day (most people: under 2,000 mg)

Doctor/Clinic: _____ Phone: _____

Heart Doctor: _____ Phone: _____

After-hours Number: _____

If you have a question or are unsure about anything, ask your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist. No question is too small when it comes to your heart.