

Living with Heart Failure

After you leave the hospital

You are receiving care for heart failure. The guidelines in this handout are meant to help you stay as healthy as possible after you leave the hospital.

OK



I am OK

If I can do my normal activities without problem:

- No shortness of breath
- Weight is stable
- No new swelling
- Normal appetite

Warning



I need to call my healthcare provider

If my symptoms are getting worse:

- Gained 3 pounds in 1 day or 5 pounds in 2 days
- New or increased swelling in my legs or ankles
- Harder time breathing, new cough, or need more pillows to breathe while sleeping
- Nausea that will not go away, or I cannot eat
- Fatigue that is getting worse
- Increased heart rate (*palpitations*)

Emergency!



I need to call 911 right away

If my symptoms are very bad or get worse quickly:

- Chest pain that does not go away
- Severe dizzy spells or have fainted
- Severe or sudden shortness of breath
- New confusion or I cannot think clearly

Daily Self-care

Weigh yourself every day.

- I have a scale at home.
- Use the same scale every day.
- Weigh yourself first thing every morning. Do this after you have urinated and before you get dressed.

Check your blood pressure every day.

- I have a blood pressure cuff at home.
- Write down your weight and blood pressure on your “Heart Failure Daily Log” every day.
- Bring this log with you to your follow-up visit.

Medicines

- When you leave the hospital, make sure you have an updated list of your medicines and any prescriptions you may need.
- Carry a list of your medicines in your wallet, in case of emergencies.
- Take your heart failure medicines as prescribed. Do not stop taking any medicines unless the provider you see for heart failure tells you to.
- If you cannot take your medicines or are not sure how to take them, call your provider’s office right away.
- Check with the provider you see for heart failure before you take any other medicine. This includes medicines you can buy without a prescription, vitamins, herbal remedies, and prescriptions from other healthcare providers.
- If you need help keeping track of your medicines, ask your nurse or pharmacist for a pill organizer.

Activity

- Talk with your provider about what kind of exercise you can do.
- Mild exercise such as walking is good for people with heart failure.
- Rest is also important.

You can also help your heart by:

- Not smoking. Ask your provider for the handout “Resources to Quit Smoking or Using Tobacco.” It includes information about the Washington State Quit Line (877-270-STOP).
- Following your provider’s advice about alcohol.
- Keeping your flu and pneumonia vaccines up to date.

Diet

- Follow your provider’s advice about how much sodium (salt) to eat. Most people with heart failure must limit their sodium to less than 2,000 mg a day to avoid fluid buildup.

My daily salt allowance is _____ mg.

- Do **not** add salt to your foods. Check with your provider before using salt substitutes.
- Follow your provider’s advice about fluid intake. You may be asked to limit liquids.

My daily fluid allowance is _____ oz.

Follow-up Visit

See your provider **within 7 days after your discharge** from the hospital. Make sure you know when your next appointment is before you leave the hospital.

Cardiomyopathy and Heart Disease Support Group

These group meetings are for patients and their families who are coping with heart disease. They provide a relaxed setting where people share ideas and ask questions.

To learn more about this support group, call the social worker at 206.598.6591. Or, call the clinic nurse at 206.598.4300.

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

Heart Institute at UWMC:
206.598.4300

Community Care Line:
206.744.2500

