

TuftsMedicine

CARING FOR YOUR HEART

Living well with heart failure



Heart Failure Zones

Which Heart Failure Zone are you today? **GREEN**, **YELLOW** or **RED**?

Clinician's Name: _____ Discharge Weight: _____

Clinician's Phone: _____ First Weight at Home: _____

EVERY DAY

- Weigh yourself in the morning after you urinate and before you eat or drink anything. Use the same scale and wear the same amount of clothing. Write down your weight daily in a calendar and compare to yesterday's weight.
- Take your medications as prescribed
- Check for swelling in your ankles, feet, legs and stomach
- Eat food low in salt
- Balance activity and rest periods

GREEN ZONE

ALL CLEAR: I am doing well today.
Your symptoms are under control.

- No weight gain
- No swelling
- No shortness of breath
- No chest pain
- Normal activity level

What to do:

- Keep taking your medications as prescribed
- Continue with your daily weights
- Continue to follow a low salt diet and fluid restriction
- Keep your regular physician appointments

YELLOW ZONE

CAUTION: I feel worse today.
This zone is a warning.

- Weight gain of more than 3 pounds in one day or 5 pounds in one week
- Increased cough
- Increased shortness of breath
- Extra pillows needed to sleep
- Increased swelling of the hands or feet or stomach bloating
- Anything unusual that bothers you

What to do:

- Call your heart failure clinician
- Your medications may need to be adjusted

RED ZONE

EMERGENCY: I am having a bad day.

- Shortness of breath
- Wheezing or chest tightness at rest
- Need to use a chair or recliner to sleep
- Feeling confused or disoriented

What to do:

- **You need to see your heart failure clinician RIGHT AWAY**
- **If you cannot reach your clinician, call 911 or go to the nearest Emergency Department. Bring this form with you.**

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What is heart failure?

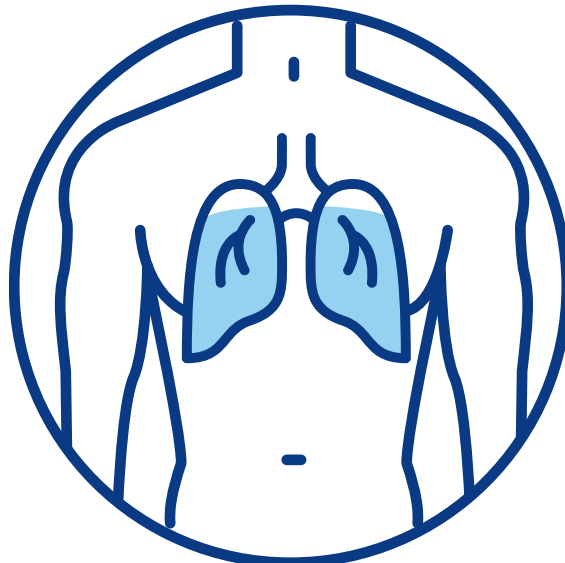


Heart failure means the heart cannot pump blood well.

- When your heart doesn't pump well, it can make you feel weak, tired, or dizzy.
- Heart failure causes water to leak out of your blood vessels. This water can fill up your lungs and make you short of breath. It can also cause your legs to swell.



Water in legs causes swelling.



Water in lungs can make you short of breath.

How to take your medicines



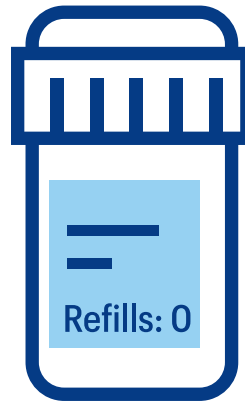
Heart failure can be controlled with medicine. Taking your medicine correctly will help your heart pump better and can make you feel better and live longer.

Take your pills



- Take each of your medicines, every day, at the correct times.
- Do not skip doses of your medicines, even when you feel good.
- If you think you are having side effects from your medicines, don't stop taking them, talk to your doctor immediately.
- If you are having trouble paying for your medicine, talk to your doctor.

Don't run out of pills



- Make sure you always have enough medicine left in your pill bottles. Don't run out of medication without checking for refills first.
- Be aware of how many refills you have on your pill bottles. Every time you pick up your medicines, check the number of refills you have left. If the label says No Refills or Refills: 0 then call your doctor right away to get more refills.
- Get all of your pills from the same pharmacy every time.

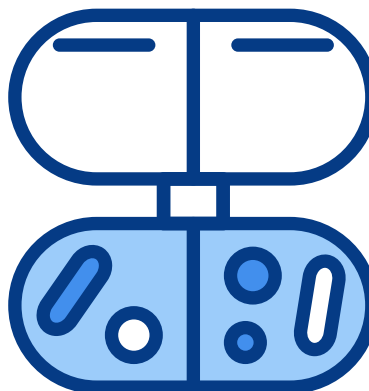


Bring your pills to the clinic and hospital visit



- Bring all of your pill bottles and medicine list to each healthcare visit.
- Show your clinician how and when you take your pills. This will help you and your healthcare team keep you safe and make sure you don't run out of pills.

Have a system



- Keep a list of your medicines with instructions for how many pills to take, and when to take them.
- Keep your medicine bottles in a place that makes it easy to remember to take them.
- Keep your medicines in a pill container for each day of the week. Keep your pill container in a place that makes it easy to remember to take them. Keeping your medicines next to your toothbrush, at your bedside, or in the kitchen are good ideas.
- Set an alarm on your cell phone as a reminder.
- If you are going out of the house for a long time, bring enough medicine with you.

How to eat less salt



Your team may ask you to restrict fluids in addition to taking diuretics (water pills).

Eating less salt will help you feel better.



Ask your clinician how much fluid you can have per day (for example, 2000 mL or 2 liters per day).

Fluids are liquids (like soda, water, coffee and juices). Fluids are also foods that become liquid at room temperature (like popsicles, soup, ice cream and Jell-O).

- Salt is also called “sodium” and is found in many foods.
- Most foods you eat have salt even if you can’t see it or taste it.
- Salt acts like a sponge and makes the body hold water.
- Eating too much salt can cause swelling in your legs, water in your lungs and can cause you to gain weight.
- The nutrition plan for heart failure limits the sodium you get from your diet (foods and beverages) to **1,500–2,000 milligrams per day.**

How to eat less salt

Avoid or limit these high salt foods:



fast food



frozen meals



hot dogs, bacon
and smoked meat



pizza



cheese



canned beans
and vegetables



instant hot
cereals



salted
international
foods



sauces and
seasonings



snack foods



canned and
smoked fish



canned soup



Choose these low salt foods:



fruit



fresh fish



fresh meats



yogurt



frozen
vegetables



lemon slice, olive
oil and vinegar



dried beans



fresh
vegetables



hummus



Dash™



graham crackers



eggs

How to eat less salt

When you eat out:

- Restaurant, fast food, and take out food can be very high in salt (sodium).
- Many restaurants provide nutrition facts on their menus or websites.
- Ask for food cooked with no salt or low salt menu options.
- Avoid butter, cheese or sauces.
- Avoid fried foods — choose grilled, baked or steamed foods.
- Choose oil and vinegar salad dressing.
- Ask for dressing and sauces on the side.
- Limit or choose fast food items with less sodium.
- Avoid bacon, sausage or ham.

When you eat at home:

- Don't add salt to food when you cook or eat.
- Season foods with herbs and seasonings that do not have salt.
- Make your own or choose low sodium sauces, salad dressings, breads and desserts.
- Avoid "instant foods" that come in a bag or box.
- Rinse canned foods (even canned fish) before cooking and eating them.
- Read food labels and choose foods that have less than 140 mg of sodium per serving (see pages 22–23 for additional resources related to sodium restrictions).



Reading a food label

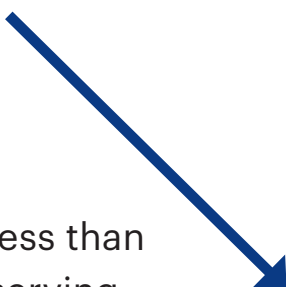
Step 1:

Look at the serving size



Step 2:

Look at the sodium
per serving



Step 3:

Choose foods with less than
140mg sodium per serving

Conclusion:

This food has 30mg of sodium
in ½ cup.

This food is a good choice!

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 1/2 cup (120g)	
Servings Per Container About 3.5	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 20	Calories from Fat 0
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 0g	0%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 30mg	1%
Total Carbohydrate 4g	1%
Dietary Fiber 2g	8%
Sugars 2g	
Protein less than 1g	
Vitamin A 4%	Vitamin C 4%
Calcium 2%	Iron 0%
*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet.	

Be a smart shopper.

Always check how much sodium
is in EACH serving and HOW MANY
servings you are planning to have.

Choose items labeled:

- Low Sodium
- Sodium Free
- No Salt Added

Watch out for items labeled:

- Lower Sodium



Being more active is one of the best things you can do for your heart failure.

Moving more can help you have more energy and feel more upbeat. You can exercise by:

- Using a stationary bicycle
- Walking in your neighborhood or at the mall
- Going to an exercise class
- Sweeping, vacuuming, or dusting
- Mowing the lawn or working in your garden
- Walking to the bus

A lot of people say that walking is the easiest exercise for them. Many people walk with a friend or their pet. Walking is easy, fun and free.

Your body needs time to get used to being more active.

You will notice that it will get easier and you will be able to do more.

- Start slowly
- Stop if you feel chest pain, dizziness or have severe shortness of breath

Steps for doing more:

- Wear clothes and shoes that fit well
Begin by doing an activity for 10 minutes, three times per week.
- After a couple of weeks, add 5 minutes, so that you are exercising 15 minutes at a time.
- When you feel comfortable doing more, add another 5 minutes.
- You want to work up to 30 minutes of exercise 3 times a week.



The daily check-up helps you know how to take action for your heart failure. By finding problems early, you can feel better and stay out of the hospital.

1 How do I feel today?

Am I short of breath walking?



Doing well — walk easily with no shortness of breath



Getting worse — shortness of breath after walking a short distance



Call your clinician — shortness of breath at rest

Daily check-up

1

How do I feel today?

Am I short of breath while sleeping?



Doing well —
sleeping flat, no
shortness
of breath



Getting worse —
needing 2 pillows
or more to avoid
shortness of breath



Call your clinician
— have to sleep
upright to avoid
shortness of breath

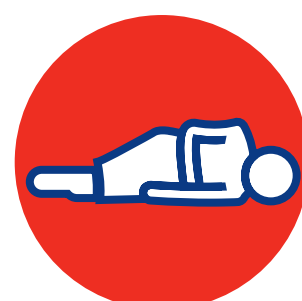
Am I feeling faint or dizzy?



Doing well — not dizzy
or sometimes a little
dizzy when standing up



Getting worse —
dizzy for a long time



Call your clinician —
almost passed out,
passed out (fainted)
or fallen



2 Do you have swelling?

Swelling in your legs can be a sign that your body is holding on to too much water. This is easy to check.

To check for swelling each morning:

- Press firmly into the skin on the front part of your lower leg.
- If your finger makes a pit in your skin, you have swelling in that part of your leg.
- Be aware of how much swelling is usual for you and look for changes.



Doing well —
no swelling



Getting worse —
swelling in ankle or shin



Call your clinician —
swelling in knee area



3

Weigh yourself each morning

- After you “pee” (urinate).
- Before you eat breakfast.
- Before you get dressed.
- Before your medications.



Know your target weight

- Ask your clinician what your target weight is each time you visit. The target weight is where your heart is working best.
- You and your clinician need a plan for when your weight goes up too much.

Your target weight

Your discharge weight

When to call us for help



Call us if:

You are short of breath at rest or more short of breath than usual.



You have to sleep upright or in a chair.



You have more swelling in your legs than usual.



You have a lot of dizziness or light-headedness that is worse than usual.



Your weight goes up by 3 pounds in a day and/or by more than five pounds in a week.



Additional support

Some patients with heart failure need additional help at home.

- Some patients with heart failure need additional help at home. Your case manager, nurse, or clinician may recommend a visiting nurse association (VNA) to provide nursing, physical therapy, or other services to help your transition home. Patients with heart failure benefit from these services to prevent needing to go back to the hospital.
- Even if you do not need a nurse or physical therapist to help you, you may be able to have tele-monitoring in your home. Tele-monitoring allows your doctors and healthcare team to follow your condition without you needing to come to the office or hospital.





Heart Failure is a serious illness and may get worse over time.

It is important to think about what “living well” with Heart Failure means to you and to plan ahead. The goal is for you to have the best quality of life possible.



- Palliative care doctors are specialists in symptom management and help patients and families dealing with issues like fatigue, shortness of breath, pain, anxiety, depression, frequent re-hospitalization and those with other serious illnesses.
- Any patient diagnosed with a serious illness may be referred to palliative care. We actively encourage consultations for patients with heart failure.
- Palliative care may improve your quality of life and even lead to a longer life.

Resources

- **American Heart Association: My Heart Failure Guide**

mydigitalpublication.com/publication/?i=753422

Interactive guide to heart failure

- **Heart Failure Society of America**

learningcenter.hfsa.org/Public/Catalog/Main.aspx

Free webinars and learning modules for patients and caregivers

- **US Department of Agriculture (USDA): Nutrition.gov**

nutrition.gov/topics/diet-and-health-conditions/heart-health

Lots of great information, including:

- Delicious Heart Healthy Recipes
- Heart Healthy Foods:
Shopping List
- Heart Healthy Eating

- **Low sodium sample menus:**

[allinahealth.org/health-conditions-and-treatments/
health-library/patient-education/heart-failure/diet-and-nutrition/
low-sodium-sample-menu-plans-for-one-week](https://allinahealth.org/health-conditions-and-treatments/health-library/patient-education/heart-failure/diet-and-nutrition/low-sodium-sample-menu-plans-for-one-week)

Great meal planning ideas



- **University of Ottawa Heart Institute: Heart Failure Nutrition Guide**
ottawaheart.ca/heart-failure-patient-guide/nutrition-guide-heart-failure

Comprehensive heart failure education:

- Low salt diet
- Limiting fluids
- Links to videos for additional information

- **Centers for Disease Control (CDC): Tips for Reducing Sodium in Diet**
cdc.gov/salt/reduce_sodium_tips.htm

Tips for shopping, eating at home and going to restaurants

- **Your Guide to Lowering Blood Pressure with Dash**
nhlbi.nih.gov/files/docs/public/heart/new_dash.pdf

Complete guide to the DASH Diet

(Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension)

Follow-up appointments



When you are discharged, your hospital clinician will instruct you to see your primary care physician and/or specialist usually within 1 week after discharge.

It is important to make and keep your follow-up appointments to be sure you have maintained good health during and after your discharge home. Early follow-up with a physician after hospital discharge has been shown to decrease the need of readmission to the hospital.



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Tufts Medicine The Tufts Medicine health system is setting a new standard for healthcare in Massachusetts. With four community hospitals, an academic medical center, a children's hospital and nearly 3,000 physicians—Tufts Medicine reaches from Cape Cod to the New Hampshire border, bringing Boston-level expertise to your community. All our caregivers deliver the highest quality of care to help people like you fight the most serious illnesses, manage chronic diseases and live healthier lives.

WINCC The "Tufts Medicine-Wide Initiative in Cardiovascular Care" is an effort across the Tufts Medicine system to pursue best practices when caring for patients with heart failure and atrial fibrillation. In June 2017, a large multi-disciplinary team with representatives from each Tufts Medicine entity came together to create these materials specifically for you to improve the quality of your care.

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