

# Heart Failure

## Getting Ready to Learn About Heart Failure

Learning something new can be hard. It is even harder if you are not feeling well. The purpose of this education plan is for you and the staff to review this information together. Here are some good things to tell the staff:

- Who you want to learn with you. We would like to have someone who will be helping you at home learn with you.
- The best way for you to learn. Do you learn best by reading a book or pamphlet, or by doing things yourself?
- If you are not feeling well, if you are in pain or you cannot focus on learning right now.

This information is important to your health. We may explain something more than once. We will be giving you information in small bits over several days. When there is something you don't understand it's okay to ask us to explain.

## What I Need to Learn About Heart Failure

By the time I leave the hospital I will be able to tell the staff:

1. The signs of heart failure
2. About my heart failure zone based on how I am doing
3. What action I take for each zone
4. The medicines used in treating my heart failure
5. About the dietary guidelines I must follow
6. How to keep up my energy and do my daily activities

## The staff will use three questions to teach me about Heart Failure:

1. What is my main problem?
2. What do I need to do?
3. Why is this important to me?

The staff will ask me to repeat back important points in my own words, or ask me to show what I have learned. They want to make sure that I know about my disease and how to take care of myself.

### **What is my main problem?**

Heart failure means my heart is not pumping blood as well as it should. It may pump at a different speed, pump with less force, or pump out less blood with each beat. Blood backs up in the veins of my body. The extra fluid in my veins seeps into my lungs or other parts of my body. When fluid seeps into my lungs, it makes it hard to breathe. Fluid seeping into other parts of my body causes swelling. Too much body fluid causes more strain on my heart.

### **What do I need to do?**

I will be able to tell the staff the signs of heart failure:

- Swelling – more swelling of my feet, ankles, leg or stomach than usual.
- Tiredness – feeling more tired than usual.
- Pain, pressure or tightness in my chest.
- Shortness of breath – more short of breath than usual.
- Weight gain - Weigh myself in the morning every day before breakfast. Write it down and compare it to yesterday's and last week's weights.

I will be able to tell the staff about my heart failure zone based on how I am doing. (See heart failure zone card.)

- Green zone – I am not having problems with swelling, tiredness, chest discomfort, shortness of breath or weight gain
- Yellow zone
  - I have gained 3 pounds in one day or 5 pounds or more over the last 5 days
  - I may be short of breath
  - More swelling of my feet, ankles, legs or stomach
  - Feel tired
  - Have a dry, hacking cough
  - Am dizzy or lightheaded
  - Just feel like “something is not right”
- Red Zone
  - I am struggling to breathe

- I have pain, pressure or tightness in my chest.
- I am confused or cannot think clearly

I will be able to tell the staff what action I take for each zone.

- Green zone – I continue to do what I am doing.
- Yellow zone – I call my doctor's office.
- Red zone – I go to the Emergency Room or call 911.

I will be able to tell the staff the medicines used in treating my heart failure.

- Keep a list of all of my current medicines at home and in my wallet or purse. Include the names of the doctors who ordered each medicine.
- It may be a good idea to also give a list to a family member or close friend.
- Take my medicines as ordered by my doctor.
  
- Heart Failure Medications - Know the dose, the reason I am taking each medicine and the side effects. Know my reactions to each medicine I am taking or have taken.
  - Diuretics – to help get rid of extra water in my body
    - (Write the name of the drug \_\_\_\_\_)
  - ACE (angiotensin converting enzyme) inhibitors and ARBS (angiotensin receptor blocker) – to help the heart contract stronger and move blood through the body
    - (Write the name of the drug \_\_\_\_\_)
  - Beta Blocker - works by slowing my heart rate, which results in stronger squeezing of the heart muscle.
    - (Write the name of the drug \_\_\_\_\_)
  - Pain medication – to treat aches and pains I might be having
    - (Write the name of the drug \_\_\_\_\_)

I will be able to tell the staff about the dietary guidelines I must follow.

- Read all labels of foods and drinks I buy to check the sodium content.

- Follow the dietary restrictions my doctor has ordered. Limit how much sodium I take in to 2,000 mg or less each day. Count the sodium from everything I eat and drink.
- Follow the fluid restrictions my doctor has ordered. Limit how much fluid I drink to 6-8 cups (48-64 ounces) each day.

I will be able to tell the staff how I keep up my energy and do my daily activities.

- Balance activity and rest periods.
- Principles of energy saving and work (see pages 14-23 in the Heart Failure booklet).
  - Plan ahead. Find the best time of day for activity. For each task, keep everything I need together.
  - Set priorities. Decide which tasks are most important. Do not rush.
  - Pace myself. Stop and rest before I get tired. I can take many short rest breaks instead of one long rest break. Sit when I can.
  - Body mechanics. Use good body posture. Try not to twist my body. Carry things close to my body and lift using my legs.
  - Simplify. Limit my stair climbing. Use items that are light in weight. Break up jobs into steps that can be done over a space of time.
  - Equipment. Look for items to make things easier for me.

### **Why is this important to me?**

Heart failure is a life long disease, just like high blood pressure and diabetes. I can reduce the impact of my heart failure by doing these things. Following this plan helps keep my heart and lungs healthy and working so I can enjoy life.

I can work with my doctor to stay healthy for long periods. I will call my doctor as soon as I have a yellow zone symptom (see heart failure zone card).

As part of my care I have received this education plan. I may also receive:

- Heart Failure Book
- Heart Failure Zones card and handout
- Weight Chart
- Home Health Care Services after discharge

## Heart Failure Education Plan

### Resources for Staff

- Heart Failure Book
- Heart Failure Zones card/handout
- [Heart Failure](#)- Nursing Reference Center Plus
- [Heart Failure Overview](#)- Medline Plus

### Teaching Tools (Items given to the patient and all located on the Center for Learning – Patient Education web page)

- Heart Failure Education Plan
- Heart Failure Book
- Heart Failure Zones card/handout
- [Weight Chart](#)

### References:

- [Heart Failure](#)- Nursing Reference Center Plus
- [Heart Failure Overview](#)- Medline Plus
- Getting Started Guide: Improving Care for Patients with Heart Failure: Focus on Ambulatory (2008) IHI
- How to Guide: Creating an Ideal Transition Home for Patients with Heart Failure (2007) IHI List articles or other references used in developing this plan.

Always close each teaching session with the question, “What questions do you have for me?”

**Approved by:** Patient Education Council

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Cardiology Unit

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