

Care Transitions & Reduction in Hospitalization

aahfn.org

American Association of Heart Failure Nurses



Daily Monitoring

Daily Weights

- Increased fluid = heart works harder to get extra blood to the body
 - Over time, this weakens the heart
- Tracking your daily weights is very important
 - It may be the first sign that you are gaining fluid
- Don't have access to a scale? Ask your healthcare provider on how to get one

How to measure your weight

- Keep a scale in the bathroom as a reminder to use it
- Weigh yourself each morning
 - After you use the bathroom
 - Before eating or drinking
- Write the weight on a calendar
- Bring the calendar to each appointment

Let your healthcare provider know right away if:

- Your weight increases by 2-3 pounds overnight
- Your weight increases by 5 pounds over one week

Eat a Diet Low in Salt

- Salt and fluid follow each other
 - When salt is high, more fluid is kept in our bodies, making the heart work harder
 - Can lead to increased blood pressure
- It is more than the salt shaker - many foods have salt already added in
- Foods high in salt:
 - Smoked meats (ham, sausage, bacon), canned foods, processed cheese, pizza, croutons, bottled salad dressings, soy sauce
- DO: Choose fresh or frozen fruit and vegetables
- DO: Choose low sodium or reduced sodium foods
- Ask your healthcare provider on how much salt you should have every day
- Ask your healthcare provider if seeing a nutritionist is for you

Check for Swelling Daily

- You may see your legs, ankles, or feet are more puffy
- You may feel your pants or shoes are tighter than the day before
- **Call your healthcare provider if you notice these**

Monitor Symptoms Daily

- Increased shortness of breath with normal activities?
- Can you only do some of your normal activities before needing a break?
- Cloudy thinking? Dizziness?
- **Call your healthcare provider and let them know what you are feeling**

Exercise Everyday

- You can still move your body with heart failure
- Ask family and friends to move with you
- Talk with your healthcare provider on how to safely exercise
 - Ask if cardiac rehab is for you

Talk with your Healthcare Provider about:

- If palliative care is for you: where specialized healthcare providers help:
 - Manage stress and symptoms of the disease
 - Improve communication between the healthcare team
 - Help you figure out your goals of care
 - Improve your quality of life
- Speak up if you do not understand what they are telling you

Care Transitions & Reduction in Hospitalization

aahfn.org

American Association of Heart Failure Nurses



Seek out Support

- Surround yourself with friends and family
- Speak to a counselor or therapist
 - Can help make sense of what is going on and help you feel better
- Support groups
 - Ask your healthcare provider for assistance on finding local groups
- Find a hobby you enjoy doing

Medication Help

- Use a pill box to sort your medications and help you remember to take them
 - Keep medication list by the pill box
 - Do not stop any medications without talking to your healthcare provider first

Some questions to ask before leaving the hospital:

- What is my goal weight?
- How much salt should I eat per day?
- Do I have a follow-up appointment with my primary care doctor or cardiologist within 7-10 days of discharge from the hospital?
 - Does this appointment fit my schedule, so I can arrive there on time?
 - Talk with your healthcare provider if the date/time of appointment needs to be changed before leaving the hospital
- Speak with social work or case management for:
 - Concerns about paying for medications
 - Concerns about getting to appointments or picking up meds
 - Concerns about paying or access to healthy food
 - Concerns about your ability to cope with the heart failure diagnosis
- Ask for a printed list of medications
 - Have a healthcare provider go over new medications, when to take them, and why you are on them
- Speak up if something does not seem right to you

References

About palliative care. <https://www.capc.org/about/palliative-care/>

Desai, A. S., Stevenson, L. W. (July 24, 2012). Rehospitalization for heart failure. *Circulation*, 2012(126): 501-506. DOI: 10.1161/CIRCULATIONAHA.112.125435

Guidelines for a low sodium diet. 2002-2021. The University of California. www.uschealth.org/education/guidelines-for-a-low-sodium-diet

Sevilla-Cazes, J., Ahmad, F. S., Bowles, K. H., Jaskowiak, A., Gallagher, T., Goldberg, L. R., Kangovi, S., Alexander, M., Rigel, B., Bart, F. K., Kimmel, S. E. (June 11, 2018). Heart failure home management challenges and reasons for readmission: A qualitative study to understand the patient's perspective. *Journal of General Internal Medicine*, 33(10): 1700-1707. DOI: 10.1007/s11606-018-4542-3