Heathy Living With Heart Failure

Heart Failure occurs when the heart muscle becomes weak or stiff and does not pump blood well enough for the body to work well. Heart failure is often a chronic (long-term) condition, so it is important that you follow your treatment plan and monitor your symptoms. There are different types of heart failure:

- Left-Sided Heart Failure – the heart does not effectively pump blood out to the body causing you to feel weak and tired.
- Right-Sided Heart Failure –blood returning to the heart backs up and may cause swelling (edema) in the lower legs.
- Congestive heart failure - fluid backs up into the lungs and tissues.

Causes of Heart Failure

- Coronary artery disease (CAD) - the buildup of cholesterol/fat (plaques) in the arteries of the heart.
- High blood pressure (hypertension) - causes the heart muscle to work harder and the muscle becomes stiff and weak.
- Heart attack (myocardial infarction) – injures the heart muscle so it does not contract or pump as well.
- Abnormal heart valves - the heart muscle must pump harder to keep the blood flowing if the valves do not open or close properly.
- Heart muscle disease (cardiomyopathy or myocarditis) - damage to the heart muscle from infections, drug or alcohol abuse, or unknown causes.
- Lung disease – the heart and lungs work together. If the lungs are not well, the heart works harder.

Risk Factors

Risk factors that make heart failure more likely:

- Overweight and lack of regular exercise
- Alcohol abuse or illegal drug use
- Smoking or chewing tobacco
- Diabetes and high blood sugar (glucose)
- High fat (lipid) levels in the blood
- Thyroid problems
- Low blood counts (anemia)
- Abnormal heart rhythms

Signs and Symptoms

- Trouble breathing with activity, such as when climbing stairs.
- Persistent cough.
- Swelling of the feet, ankles, legs, or abdomen.
- Unexplained weight gain.

- Trouble breathing when lying flat or waking up because of the need to sit up to breathe more easily.
- Increased urination during the night.
- Tired and low energy.
- Feeling light-headed, dizzy, or feeling like your heart is racing (palpitations).
- Loss of appetite or nausea.
- Confusion or trouble thinking clearly.

Treatments for Heart Failure

- Medications
  - ✓ There are many medications available to treat heart failure that will make you feel better. Your doctor will order what is best for you.
  - ✓ Take over-the-counter and prescription medicines only as told by your doctor.
  - ✓ Do not stop taking your medicine unless your doctor told you to do that. If you are considering stopping a medication for any reason, tell your doctor first.
  - ✓ Do not skip any dose of medicine.
  - ✓ Refill your prescriptions before you run out of medicine. Request at 90 supply if possible to limit trips to the pharmacy. You need your medicines every day.
- Maintaining a healthy lifestyle. This includes:
  - ✓ Eating a heart-healthy diet that is low in salt as directed by your health care provider. Include plenty of fruits and vegetables, lean proteins, low-fat dairy, and whole grains.
  - ✓ Avoiding products that contain nicotine or tobacco, such as cigarettes and e-cigarettes.
  - ✓ Limiting alcohol intake to no more than 1 drink per day for women and 2 drinks per day for men.
  - ✓ Regular moderate physical activity if directed by your doctor.
  - ✓ Monitoring your fluid intake.
  - ✓ Monitoring your weight and reporting changes to your doctor.
- When medication and lifestyle changes are not helping heart failure, surgery may be an option and could include:
  - ✓ Surgery to open blocked coronary arteries or repair damaged heart valves.
  - ✓ An implanted device such as a pacemaker, cardioverter/defibrillator, or a device to help your heart pump.
  - ✓ Heart transplant.
- Heart Failure can worsen over time making treatment and symptom management difficult. Consider talking to your doctor about options for specialized medical care for people living with a serious illness (palliative care) and end of life wishes.

Managing Related Health Problems

Many people with Heart Failure have other conditions that must be taken care of so they do not make the heart failure worse.

- Diabetes – if you are diabetic, make sure you are following your recommended diet and taking your medications as instructed. Check your blood sugar as often as you have been told and tell your doctor if your blood sugars are higher or lower than your doctor recommended.
- High Blood Pressure (Hypertension) – if you have high blood pressure make sure you are taking your medications as instructed. Check your blood pressure as often as you have been instructed and tell your doctor if it is in not in the range your doctor has told you.
- Sleep Apnea –this is a condition where you stop breathing repeatedly when you are asleep causing loud snoring and daytime tiredness, even with a full night's sleep. If you think you may have this condition tell your doctor. If you are being treated for sleep apnea it is important that you use any treatments such as a CPAP (Continuous Positive Airway Pressure) breathing machine or mouth piece every night. You should also not use sleeping pills or alcohol if you have sleep apnea.

Pay Attention to Your Symptoms to Identify Problems Early

You can use the tools included on the next pages to keep track of your health:

- Weigh yourself every day. Keeping track of your weight daily helps you to notice excess fluid sooner.
  - ✓ Weigh yourself every morning after you urinate and before you eat breakfast.
  - ✓ Wear the same amount of clothing each time you weigh yourself.
  - ✓ Record your daily weight. Provide your health care provider with your weight record.
- Check and write down your blood pressure and pulse as told by your doctor.
- Check for increased shortness of breath, cough, feet/ankle swelling, tiredness or confusion.

When to Call Your Doctor

Be sure to keep all appointment with your primary doctor and specialists. Contact you doctor right away if you have:

- Sudden weight gain of more than 2-3 pounds in a 24-hour period or 5 pounds in a week.
- More shortness of breath that is unusual for you.
- Inability to participate in your usual physical activities or tire easily.
- Increased cough more than normal, especially with physical activity.
- New or increased swelling in areas such as your hands, feet, ankles, or abdomen.
- Inability to sleep because it is hard to breathe.
- Palpitations, feel like your heart is beating fast.
- Dizzy or light-headed feeling when you stand up.

When to Get Help Right Away

Call your local emergency services (911 in the U.S.) right away or seek help at the emergency department of the nearest hospital if you experience:

- Difficulty breathing.
- A change in your awareness (noticed by you or your family), such as having trouble staying awake or having difficulty thinking clearly.
- Pain or discomfort in your chest.
- Fainting or passing out (syncope).

Additional Resources

Please click on the links or visit the sites below for videos, additional information and tools for managing heart failure.

- American Heart Association What is Heart Failure (https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/heart-failure/what-is-heart-failure)
- American Heart Association Heart Failure Resources and Tools (https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/heart-failure/heart-failure-tools-resources)
- Centers for Disease Control Heart Failure (https://www.cdc.gov/heartdisease/heart_failure.htm)

Use the two easy tools on the following pages to monitor your health EVERY DAY!

Be sure to bring your Daily Weight Tracker with you to your doctor's appointments!

Heritage Valley Beaver
1000 Dutch Ridge Road
Beaver, PA 15009

Heritage Valley Kennedy
25 Heckel Road
McKees Rocks, PA 15136

Heritage Valley Sewickley
701 Broad Street
Sewickley, PA 15143

HEART FAILURE MANAGEMENT SELF-CHECK PLAN

Weigh yourself each morning before breakfast, on the same scale, wearing the same amount of clothing. Your weight on your first day home is your CURRENT WEIGHT, use this number to monitor for weight gain. RECORD CURRENT WEIGHT HERE _____. Your doctor will work with you to determine your goal weight.

EVERY DAY	☑ **Daily weights** (step on the scale each morning before breakfast.) ☑ Take ALL **medication** as prescribed ☑ Check for **swelling** (in your feet, ankles, legs and stomach) ☑ Eat a **low-salt** (sodium) diet ☑ Be **active** daily

Which Heart Failure Zone are you in Today: Green, Yellow or Red?

GREEN ZONE (GOAL ZONE)	**ALL CLEAR:** Mild or no symptoms ☑ Physical activity level is normal for you ☑ No new or worsening shortness of breath ☑ No new swelling of feet, ankles and legs look normal for you ☑ Weight check stable ☑ No chest pain
YELLOW ZONE (WARNING ZONE)	**CAUTION: Call your Doctor** for the following: ☑ Dry hacking cough ☑ Worsening shortness of breath with activity ☑ Increased swelling of legs, ankles and feet ☑ Sudden weight gain of more than 2-3 pounds in a 24-hour period or 5 pounds in a week. ☑ Discomfort or swelling in the abdomen ☑ Trouble sleeping
RED ZONE (EMERGENCY ZONE)	**EMERGENCY: Call your Doctor** or seek **Emergency Care immediately** for the following: ☑ Frequent dry hacking cough ☑ Shortness of breath at rest ☑ Increased discomfort or swelling in the lower body ☑ Sudden weight gain of more than 2-3 pounds in a 24-hour period or 5 pounds in a week. ☑ New or worsening dizziness, confusion, sadness, or depression ☑ Increased trouble sleeping; cannot lie flat

Primary Care Physician Name/Phone Number: _____

Cardiologist Name/Phone Number: _____

DAILY WEIGHT TRACKER

Weight yourself each morning before breakfast, on the same scale, wearing the same amount of clothing. Record your weight and your symptoms, if any. **Be sure to bring your Daily Weight Tracker with you to your doctor's appointments!**

Date/ Time	Current Weight	Weight Gain/Loss	Feet Swollen	Short of Breath	More Tired	Persistent Cough	Comments (Include Heart Failure Zone: Green, Red or Yellow)

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HERITAGE VALLEY HEALTH SYSTEM

Heritage Valley Health System
www.heritagevalley.org

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