

# Heart Care at a Glance: Tips for Managing at Home

Your doctor has told you that you have congestive heart failure - CHF. This means that the pumping power of your heart is reduced. Although your heart still beats normally, your heart cannot pump as much blood with each beat. Your symptoms will depend on how severe your heart failure is. What you do everyday at home can make a big difference in how you feel. Here are some tips from your health care team.

- ✓ **Make sure you see your doctor after you go home**
  - ♥ Find out the name and phone number of your doctor before you leave the hospital
  - ♥ Make a follow-up appointment to see your doctor in the next few weeks. If you do not have an appointment, call the doctor's office or clinic when you get home.
- ✓ **Limit the amount of salt (sodium) and fluids**
  - ♥ Do not add salt to your foods during preparation or at the table
  - ♥ Choose low-salt foods and snacks
  - ♥ Read labels to check for sodium content
  - ♥ Use other spices and flavorings like lemon juice or peppers to perk up foods
  - ♥ Drink as you are thirsty, no more than six (8 ounce) glasses of liquid.
- ✓ **Weigh yourself every day**
  - ♥ Weigh at the same time each day. Morning is the best time.
  - ♥ Keep a record of your daily weights. Show this to your doctor each visit.
  - ♥ Call your doctor if you gain more than 2 pounds in one day or 5 pounds over a week
- ✓ **Take your medications every day**
  - ♥ Know your pills. Ask the nurse or doctor what each pill does.
  - ♥ Have a system for keeping track of which pills you need to take and which pills you have already taken.
  - ♥ Check with the doctor, nurse or pharmacist before you take any drugs that the doctor did not order (such as cold remedies or sleeping aids). Avoid non-Tylenol drugs like Advil or Motrin as these drugs interfere with the Lasix and the ACE inhibitor.
- ✓ **Get active**
  - ♥ Exercise regularly within your doctor's guidelines. Do the exercise 3 - 5 times per week. Ask your doctor about a supervised program such as Cardiac Rehabilitation or the YMCA. Good activities to choose include walking, cycling, swimming or low-impact aerobic routines.
- ✓ **Call your doctor if...**
  - ♥ You have increased swelling in the feet or abdomen
  - ♥ You have increased difficulty breathing
  - ♥ You wake up short of breath
  - ♥ You have a new cough that doesn't go away
  - ♥ You have nausea or can't eat
  - ♥ You feel very dizzy (not just when first standing)
  - ♥ You have a rapid weight gain (See above.)

