

Action Plan for Staying Healthy at Home With Heart Failure

This handout is a quick guide to staying healthy and safe at home. Follow these tips and all instructions from your hospital care team to help you avoid another hospital stay.

Take Your Medicines

Special guidelines to note:

- You are likely taking many medicines to manage your heart failure, which may include diuretics (water pills), blood pressure medications and other heart failure medicines. Take these medicines exactly as prescribed by your care team.
- If you are unsure about how to take your medicines or you cannot afford them, please tell your doctor or nurse.

Go to Your Follow-Up Visits

It is **very** important to go to your follow-up visits with your primary care doctor or heart doctor (cardiologist). Your doctor needs to see you at follow-up visits to check on your progress and make sure your medicines are working. They need to see you within 1 week of your hospital stay and then at least once a month for 3 months.

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Ways to Stay Well

Too much fluid can be a serious problem when you have heart failure and can lead to a return visit to the hospital. Things you can do help prevent this problem include:

- Eat a healthy diet based on advice from your care team. Avoid salty foods. Ask your doctor how much sodium (salt) you can safely have each day and write it down here_____milligrams (mg). Work hard to avoid going over that amount. Read food labels carefully for sodium content and do not use the salt shaker.
- Limit the amount of fluids you drink each day. Ask your doctor how many ounces of fluid you can safely have each day and write it down here_____ounces. Keep track of your fluid intake each day and work hard not to go over that amount. Be aware that fluids like soups and sport drinks are often high in sodium. Always read food labels to see the sodium content.
- Monitor your weight. Weigh yourself each morning after going to the bathroom and wear the same amount of clothing each time. A weight gain of 3 pounds or more in one day may be a warning sign of fluid build-up.
- Watch for swelling. Check yourself daily for swelling in your feet, ankles, legs and belly.
- Exercise – before starting any exercise program, ask your doctor if it's safe to do so.
- If need help quitting smoking:
 - Call the Ohio Quit Line at **1-800-QUIT-NOW** or visit **smokefree.gov**
 - Find out if your insurance covers our UH Tobacco Treatment Counseling program. If so, you will need a doctor's order to use this service. To learn more about our program, call **216-896-1810**.

Hang this on your refrigerator to remind you of reasons to call your doctor or 9-1-1



GOOD TO GO

Follow the tips in this handout to help you to stay healthy and out of the hospital. Always monitor your health and be aware of the signs of new or worsening health concerns. Read below to learn when and who to call for help.



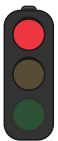
CAUTION

Call your doctor's office right away if you have any of the problems listed below. Your doctor may need to adjust your medicine doses and/or order blood tests. Keep taking your medicines as ordered until you see your doctor.

- Weight gain of 3 pounds or more
- Swelling in your feet, ankles, legs or belly
- Feel short of breath or it's hard to breathe
- Need to use more pillows when sleeping
- Feel more tired or have less energy
- Feel dizzy, lightheaded or faint
- Dry, hacking cough that is worse when you lie down
- Easy bleeding or bruising
- Any other symptom that causes concern

My doctor's name: _____

Office phone number: _____



STOP

Call 9-1-1 right away if you have any of these problems:

- Chest pain or tightness
- Fainting
- Struggling to breathe
- Feeling short of breath at rest
- Confusion or not being able to think clearly