

# Heart Talk: Living with Heart Failure

*Education for Patients,  
Families and Caregivers*



This content has been provided by Qualidigm and its Communities of Care project. More information as well as educational videos about heart failure can be found on our website: [www.Qualidigm.org](http://www.Qualidigm.org) or by emailing: [hearttalk@qualidigm.org](mailto:hearttalk@qualidigm.org).



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# What is Heart Failure?

## Heart failure is:

- ♥ Weakness of the heart
- ♥ Sometimes heart failure is also called:
  - Congestive heart failure
  - Pulmonary edema
  - Fluid on lungs

## Symptoms (what you will be feeling) of heart failure are:

- ♥ Hard time breathing
- ♥ Swollen ankles, legs, or belly/abdomen (sometimes doctors call it “edema”)
- ♥ Weak and tired



# Can Heart Failure Be Treated?

## **YES!**

Although heart failure is a chronic disease (it will never go away no matter how good you feel) it can be treated so that you can continue to live your life.

### **Heart Failure Can Be Treated with:**

- ♥ Medications
- ♥ Procedures
- ♥ Surgery



Be sure to **talk to your doctor** to see what is the right kind of treatment for you.

# What YOU can do!

**Patients**, like **you** have an important part in keeping yourself feeling good and out of the hospital.

**People with heart failure can live happy lives for many years by following these 6 steps:**

1. Take the medications that your doctor gives you
2. Go to your doctor appointments
3. Monitor (watch) your symptoms (how you feel) and weight
4. Adapt your diet (eating) and fluids (drinking)
5. Get exercise as directed
6. Limit alcohol and caffeine and do not use tobacco

Each of these steps is further explained in this booklet.  
Keep reading!

# Step 1: Take Your Medications!

It is important to take your medications just like the doctor told you.

Your medicines may change after each doctor appointment, or when you are in the hospital.



It can be confusing, so keeping a list is very important. Be sure to share this list with all of your doctors and bring it to all of your appointments.

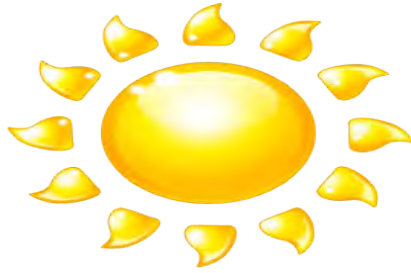
Patients who take their medicines as the doctor said to **live longer, feel better, and spend less time in the hospital.**



## What medicines do I need to take?

Each MORNING after you wake up, follow this schedule:

Morning Medicines				
Medicine name (generic and name brand) and amount	Why am I taking this medicine?	How much do I take?	How do I take this medicine?	Doctor who gave it to me:



## What medicines do I need to take?

Each day at NOON, follow this schedule:

Afternoon Medicines				
Medicine name (generic and name brand) and amount	Why am I taking this medicine?	How much do I take?	How do I take this medicine?	Doctor who gave it to me:





## What medicines do I need to take?

Each EVENING, follow this schedule:

Evening Medicines				
Medicine name (generic and name brand) and amount	Why am I taking this medicine?	How much do I take?	How do I take this medicine?	Doctor who gave it to me:



## What medicines do I need to take?

Each day at BEDTIME, follow this schedule:

Bedtime Medicines				
Medicine name (generic and name brand) and amount	Why am I taking this medicine?	How much do I take?	How do I take this medicine?	Doctor who gave it to me:



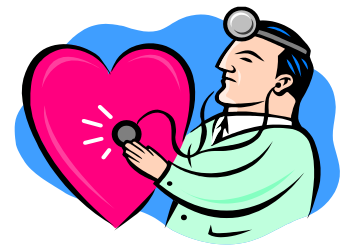
## What other medicines can I take?

	Medicine name and amount	How much do I take?	How do I take this medicine?
If I need medicine for a headache			
If I need medicine to stop smoking			
If I need medicine for _____			
If I need medicine for _____			
If I need medicine for _____			
If I need medicine for _____			
If I need medicine for _____			
If I need medicine for _____			

Remember to tell all of your doctors about all your medicines, vitamins and other medications you may get without a prescription at the drug store.

# Step 2: Go to Your Doctor Appointments

Do not be afraid to talk to your doctor or other people in the office about any questions or concerns you may have. Always ask someone if you don't understand something, or if you feel something is "just not right." Your doctors and nurses are there to help and support you.



## Tips to follow:

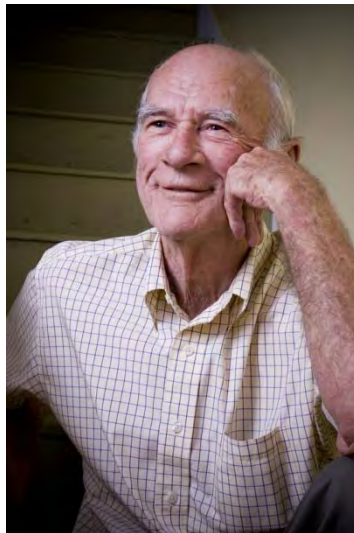
- ♥ Set up a doctor appointment before you leave the hospital or other care facility
- ♥ Set it up on the best day and time for you
- ♥ Make sure you have a ride to your appointments
- ♥ **GO TO ALL OF YOUR SCHEDULED APPOINTMENTS**
- ♥ Bring a friend or family member
- ♥ Bring all medications or a medication list to all doctor appointments
- ♥ Ask questions!

Heart failure is not simple. The doctor needs to see you often to keep you well.

# Step 3: Monitor Your Symptoms (How do you feel?)

## Keep these things in mind:

- ♥ When your body holds extra fluid (water), your weight goes up
- ♥ Weight gain from fluid can start up to two weeks before you feel other symptoms
- ♥ By weighing yourself every day, you can keep track of your weight



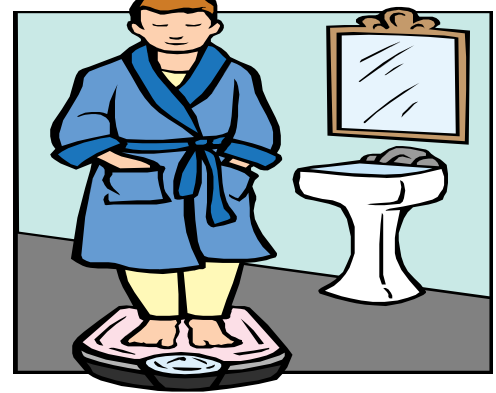
# Step 3: Weigh Yourself

## Things you will need to do:

- ♥ Buy a scale if you do not already have one
- ♥ Make sure you can read the numbers easily on the scale
- ♥ Write your weight down **EVERY DAY** using the charts on the next two pages or on a calendar
- ♥ Bring the weight chart to your doctor appointment

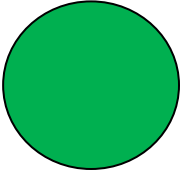
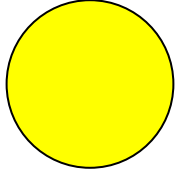
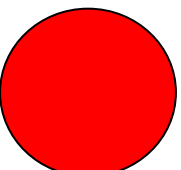
## Remember to:

- ♥ Weigh yourself every morning at about the same time
  - After urinating
  - Before having anything to eat or drink
  - Wearing the same amount of clothing
  - Using the same scale
- ♥ Tell your doctor when you gain:
  - 3 pounds in one day OR
  - 5 pounds in one week































# Are you in the Correct Heart Failure Zone?

Use these Zones To Help Manage Your Heart Failure

 <p>GREEN ZONE "All Clear"- GOAL</p>	<p>You have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No shortness of breath – breathing easy</li> <li>• No weight gain more than 3 pounds per day</li> <li>• No swelling of feet, ankles, legs or stomach</li> <li>• No chest pain</li> </ul>	<p>What to do:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep up the good work!!</li> <li>• Take your medicine</li> <li>• Eat a low salt diet</li> <li>• Weigh yourself every day</li> </ul>
 <p>YELLOW ZONE "Caution"- WARNING</p>	<p>You have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weight gain of 3 pounds in 1 day or 5 pounds in one week</li> <li>• More shortness of breath – breathing harder</li> <li>• Harder to breathe lying down – the need to sleep in a chair</li> <li>• More swelling in your feet, ankles, legs or stomach</li> <li>• Feeling more tired</li> <li>• New or unusual coughing</li> <li>• Dizziness</li> </ul>	<p>What to do:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Call your doctor or nurse:</li> </ul> <p>#: _____</p> <p>Doctor's Name: _____</p> <p>Nurse's Name: _____</p>
 <p>RED ZONE "EMERGENCY"</p>	<p>You have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hard time breathing</li> <li>• Struggling to breathe even at rest</li> <li>• Chest pain or discomfort</li> <li>• Feeling faint</li> </ul>	<p>What to do:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Call 911</b> or</li> <li>• Get help and go to the emergency room</li> </ul>

# Daily Weight and Zone Chart

Use this chart or a calendar to keep track of your weight and see which zone you are in each day. Share this with your doctor at your appointments.

Sunday	Date: Weight: Zone: 	Date: Weight: Zone: 	Date: Weight: Zone: 	Date: Weight: Zone: 
Monday	Date: Weight: Zone: 	Date: Weight: Zone: 	Date: Weight: Zone: 	Date: Weight: Zone: 
Tuesday	Date: Weight: Zone: 	Date: Weight: Zone: 	Date: Weight: Zone: 	Date: Weight: Zone: 
Wednesday	Date: Weight: Zone: 	Date: Weight: Zone: 	Date: Weight: Zone: 	Date: Weight: Zone: 
Thursday	Date: Weight: Zone: 	Date: Weight: Zone: 	Date: Weight: Zone: 	Date: Weight: Zone: 
Friday	Date: Weight: Zone: 	Date: Weight: Zone: 	Date: Weight: Zone: 	Date: Weight: Zone: 
Saturday	Date: Weight: Zone: 	Date: Weight: Zone: 	Date: Weight: Zone: 	Date: Weight: Zone: 

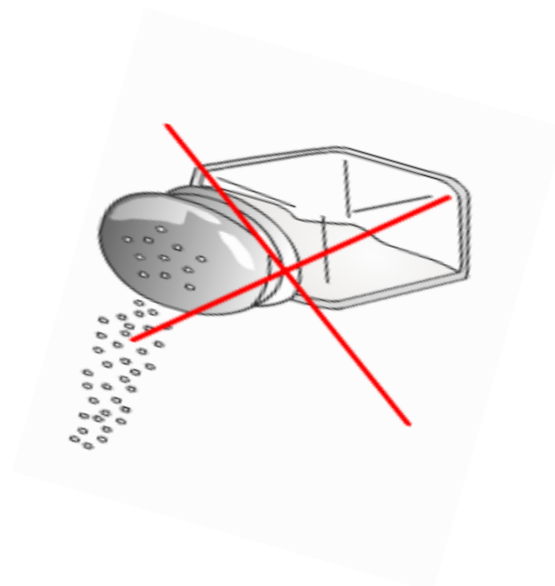


# Step 4: Adapt Diet and Fluids (What You Eat and Drink)

Salt is also called “SODIUM” and is found in most foods you eat.

**Why do you need to limit the salt (sodium) in your diet?**

- ♥ Salt acts like a sponge and makes your body hold onto water. Eating too much salt can cause you to gain weight, make your legs swell and cause water to go to your lungs, making it harder to breathe.



**How much salt (sodium) can you have each day?**

- ♥ Doctors recommend that you eat less than 2000mg of salt each day. You can do this by taking the salt shaker off the table and watching which kinds of food you eat.

**SALT = SODIUM and SODIUM = SALT**

# Reading a Nutrition Label

## Sodium = Salt

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 1 cup (30g)	
Servings Per Container 12	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 90	Calories from Fat 40
Total Fat 1g	
Saturated Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0 mg	0%
Sodium 190 mg	8%
Total Carbohydrate 22g	7%
Dietary Fiber 3g	12%
Sugars 9g	
Protein 3g	

Milligrams of salt per 1 cup serving

Here is an example of a nutrition label. Always check to see how many servings are in the box or can. If you eat a portion larger than the serving size, you end up eating more salt than is listed on the label.

Your goal is to LOWER the amount of salt (sodium) you eat. Sodium (salt) is found in many foods, in addition to the salt you may add to your foods:

1 teaspoon salt = 2,000 mg sodium

1 teaspoon baking soda = 821 mg sodium

1 teaspoon baking powder = 339 mg sodium

1 teaspoon MSG = 492 mg sodium

# Reading a Nutrition Label

## Sodium = Salt

It is important that you read food labels to find out the sodium content of foods. It may also be helpful to know that the government ruled that some words used on labels must mean what they say:

<b><u>Key words:</u></b>	<b><u>Meaning:</u></b>
“Sodium Free” (or “salt free”)	Very little salt (less than 5 mg per serving)
“Very low sodium”	35 mg sodium or less per serving
“Low Sodium”	140 mg sodium or less per serving
“Less Sodium”	20% sodium reduction from original
“Reduced Sodium”	At least 25% reduction from the original
“Light in Sodium”	50% sodium reduction from the original
“Unsalted”/ “Without added salt”	No salt added during process
“No salt added”	No salt added during process



# Foods High in Salt



These foods should be **avoided** or **limited**:

- Canned foods/soups
- Frozen dinners
- Deli meats
- Hot dogs
- Jar tomato/pasta sauce
- Pickles
- Sausages and Kielbasa
- Potato chips
- Ham and Bacon
- French fries
- Sea salt
- Adobo seasoning
- Salad dressings
- Cheeses
- Soy sauce

## Tips To Keep You Eating Healthy:

♥ If you do eat salt, tell your doctor:

- Medications may need to be adjusted
- More doctor visits may be needed
- You may need to talk with a diet specialist, commonly called a dietitian

♥ If you eat out, choose heart healthy foods. A few suggestions are:

- Order baked or broiled foods (chicken, fish and steamed vegetables)
- Ask for a salad dressing, sauce or gravy on the side

# Step 4: Adapt Diet and Fluids (What You Eat and Drink)

## Drinking Too Many Fluids?



Most people with heart failure can drink normal amounts of fluid. Do not restrict your fluids unless you are told to do so by your doctor.

By staying away from salt and watching your fluid intake in your diet, you can **live longer**, **feel better**, and spend **less time in the hospital**.

# Step 5:

## Exercising and Keeping Active

In general, exercising, having sex and driving are OK.

Make sure to talk to your doctor about what kind of exercise is safe or good for you.



### **Tips to follow for exercising and having sex:**

- Follow the treatment plan your doctor gives you
- Wait at least 1 hour after eating before exercising or having sex
- Stop and rest for a while if you get tired or have a problem
- Pace yourself
- Choose a time when you feel your best



Write down the exercise goals your doctor told you here and follow this schedule:

Doctor Ordered Exercise Routine					
Exercise Goal(s):					
Day	Time	Activity	Length	While exercising I felt:	After exercising I feel:

# Step 6:

## Limit Alcohol and Caffeine

### Alcohol:

If you are allowed to drink alcohol, have no more than:

- ♥ 2 drinks a day (for men)
- ♥ 1 drink a day (for women)

One drink is:

- ♥ 1 ½ shot glasses of 80 proof or 1 shot glass of 100 proof alcohol
- ♥ 5 oz glass of wine
- ♥ 12 oz bottle of beer



**Alcohol can make your heart failure worse. It can also affect your medicines.**

### Caffeine:

Caffeine is usually OK in moderation (always check with your doctor). If allowed, have no more than:

- ♥ 1 or 2 cups per day



# Step 6:

## Do NOT use Tobacco

### Tobacco Use:

- ♥ If you smoke (cigarettes or cigars), please **STOP!**
  - It is bad for anyone, but especially for those with heart failure
  - It makes the heart work harder
  - It can lead to heart attacks
- ♥ Ask your doctor or nurse about help to quit smoking



# Planning for the Future

## Some things to keep in mind to plan for the future:

- ♥ A legal document called an Advanced Directive or Living Will can help your family and medical team in medical emergencies if you are unable to make known your wishes. Everyone should have Advanced Directives.

## An Advanced Directive can include:

- ♥ A “medical durable power of attorney” (someone you name to make medical decisions when you cannot)
- ♥ Cardiopulmonary (CPR) instructions or Do Not Resuscitate (DNR)

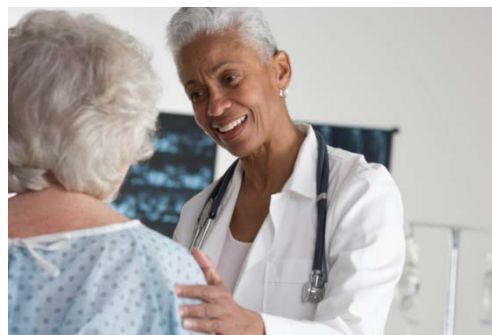
Many states have free templates on the internet for creating your own advanced directive or living will. You can also speak with an attorney about it.

**Talk with your family and your doctor about your feelings and care wishes.**

# Make These Steps A Permanent Part Of Your Life!

Following these 6 steps and anything else the doctor and nurse tell you to do will pay off for you! You can stay active and enjoy a quality life by following their advice. We know that it can be hard. If you are having trouble following the advice of the doctor, please do not change anything – instead, talk to your doctor or nurse for help!

Write down any problems you are having or questions that you would like to ask your doctor or nurse. Remember to bring them with you to your doctor appointments to get some answers.



Things that are hard for me and questions I have:

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) \_\_\_\_\_



# Remember These 6 Steps To STAYING HEALTHY!

1. Take the medications that your doctor gave you
2. Go to your doctor appointments
3. Monitor (watch) your symptoms (how you feel) and weight
4. Adapt your diet (eating) and fluids (drinking)
5. Get exercise as directed
6. Limit alcohol and caffeine and do not use tobacco



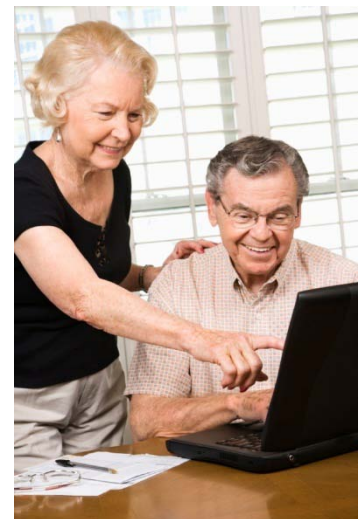
Patients who follow these steps **live longer, feel better,** and spend **less time in the hospital.**

# Heart Talk Video

A FREE video on how to live with heart failure is available at [www.HeartTalk.org](http://www.HeartTalk.org).

*Heart Talk: How to Live with Heart Failure* is a video created for patients living with heart failure, their families and caregivers. A doctor explains how you can feel and live well with heart failure, including tips on how to stay healthy and how to stay out of the hospital.

To watch the video, go to the website: [www.HeartTalk.org](http://www.HeartTalk.org) and scroll down to Series 3. The video will play like a movie on your computer.



This booklet and the video have the same information so you can follow along as you watch.



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