

# Work with your doctor...Take your medicine...Change your lifestyle...

## EAT A WELL-BALANCED DIET

Make healthy food choices. Visit with the hospital dietitian if you need help.

- Limit fluid intake as directed by your doctor
- Avoid drinking alcohol
- Eat a low-sodium (low-salt) diet
- Read food labels
- Do not add salt when cooking or at the table
- Limit eating canned food (drain and rinse to lower salt content)
- Limit amount of cholesterol and fat in your diet
- Follow your diet as directed

## GET EXERCISE

Talk with your doctor about the amount of exercise you can do. Your doctor may refer you to a cardiac rehabilitation (rehab) program.

### As you begin exercising:

- Start slow and build to 20 or 30 minutes, three to four times a week
- Stop activity immediately if you feel: increased shortness of breath, an irregular heartbeat, faint or dizzy or chest pain. Call your doctor if symptoms do not quit after 15 minutes of rest.

## TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

Manage your heart failure. Follow these self-management goals and work with your doctor.

- Keep all of your doctor appointments – your doctor is there to help you
- Wear or carry identification of your medical condition and current medications
- Decrease your stress level when possible
- Get plenty of rest
- Get a yearly flu shot and be up-to-date on your pneumonia shot
- Get educated – ask your doctor and nurse all your questions

## TAKE YOUR MEDICINE

The medications your doctor ordered you to take are important. Do not stop taking them without talking to your doctor. Some heart failure medications include:

- Diuretic “water pill” – decreases fluid retention and swelling. A potassium supplement may be given to replace lost potassium.
- Ace inhibitors, ARBs or other medication – helps the heart “pump” better
- Digoxin – strengthens the heart and slows the heart rate
- Warfarin “blood thinner” – prevents blood clots

Keep a current list of your medications with you at all times. Review the list with your physician(s) at each appointment.

**TIP:** Before taking over-the-counter treatments like cold medicines, pain relievers, vitamins and herbal products, check with your doctor or pharmacist to make sure they don't interact with your current medicines.

### Make sure you are taking your medications correctly.

- Take your medicine at the time your doctor ordered
- Use a daily event (like brushing teeth or a certain meal) to remind yourself
- Place your medicines in a daily or weekly pill box. Do not skip a dose. If you do, take it right away but don't double dose
- Read the medication instructions that come with your medicine
- Know the side effects and call your doctor if you have any
- Avoid drinking alcohol
- Tell all your doctors about all medications and herbs you take (include cold or flu medications)

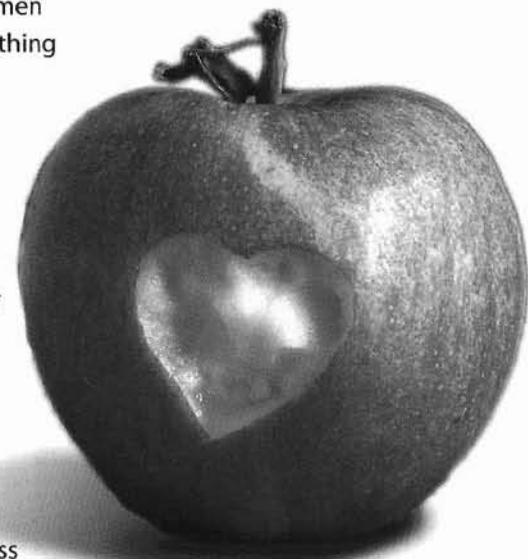
## MANAGE YOUR WEIGHT

Rapid weight gain may be a sign you are retaining water, so weighing daily is very important to managing heart failure. Keep a daily weight record and take it to all doctor appointments.

## MANAGE YOUR SYMPTOMS

Know the symptoms of heart failure and keep track of any sudden changes to report to your doctor. If you have any unusual symptoms, do not wait until your next appointment to discuss them with your doctor. Call your doctor immediately if you have:

- Weight gain of two pounds in one day or five pounds in one week
- Swelling in ankles, feet, legs or abdomen
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fullness (bloating) in your stomach
- Nausea or poor appetite
- Extreme fatigue or loss of energy
- Difficulty sleeping
- A respiratory (lung) infection or a worsening cough
- Fast heart rate (around 120 beats per minute)
- New irregular heartbeat
- Chest pain or discomfort during activity that is relieved with rest
- Decreased urination
- Restlessness, confusion
- Constant dizziness or lightheadedness



**Do you notice any of these signs?**

**Shortness of breath**

**New chest pain**

**Sweating, nausea**

**Swelling of hands, feet, ankles or legs**

**Trouble sleeping**

**Sudden severe headache**

**Weight gain**

**Tiredness or weakness**

**Decreased desire for food**

**Palpitations-sudden fast heartbeats**

**Decreased urine output**

**Fainting spell**

**Seek emergency care!**

