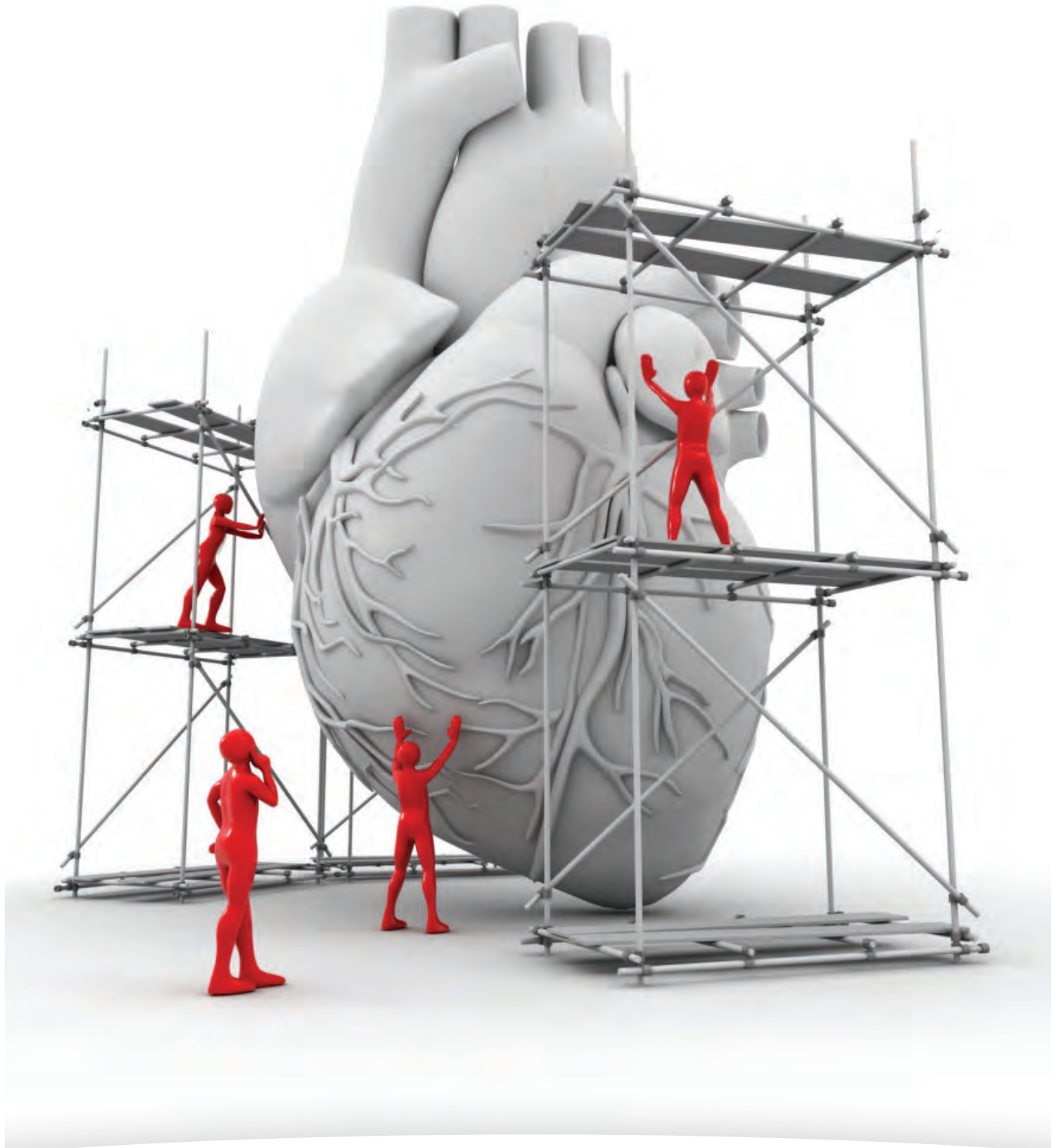


Heart Failure **Toolkit**



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**Created for you by the Dartmouth-Hitchcock
Heart Failure Team**

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Managing Heart Failure

While having heart failure may sound scary, many people with this condition can feel better and enjoy life by making a few lifestyle changes. Here are things you can do to help manage your heart failure.

✓	<p>Know when to call your doctor. Managing your heart failure at home will help to keep you out of the hospital. Make a habit of looking at the symptoms we have described inside your “Daily Log Book” for when you should call your doctor. If you experience any of these symptoms, call your doctor right away.</p>
✓	<p>Weigh yourself every day - on the same scale, at the same time, first thing in the morning! It is very important to weigh yourself the same way, everyday! Use your log book to record your daily weight and remember to bring this with you to all your doctor’s appointments.</p>
✓	<p>Always take your medications as directed.</p>
✓	<p>Follow your 2 gram sodium diet.</p>
✓	<p>Exercise every day. Exercise can make a big difference because, over time, it may improve your heart function.</p>
✓	<p>Avoid alcohol!</p>
✓	<p>Avoid tobacco!</p>
✓	<p>Be sure to keep your scheduled doctor’s appointments.</p>

REMEMBER! You have a very important role in managing your heart failure.

Call Your Doctor If:

- Your weight increases by 2-3 pounds in a day or 5 pounds in a week.
- You have weight gain for more than 2 days straight.
- You have swelling in legs, ankles or feet.
- You feel bloated.
- You feel lightheaded or dizzy.
- You feel more short of breath with exercise.
- You have a cough that doesn't go away.
- You are sleeping on more pillows or are sitting up to sleep.
- You have increased urination at night.

Why Weigh Yourself Every Day?

It is very important to weigh yourself **every day**. Weighing yourself each day is the best way to know if you are retaining water. A sudden weight gain or a steady rise in weight is a warning sign that your body is retaining too much water and salt. Your legs, ankles, feet and fingers may also swell. This could mean your heart failure is getting worse, and you will need to follow your doctor's directions for getting rid of excess water. Getting rid of excess water helps your heart work better and makes you feel better.

Tips for Weighing Yourself

- Use the same scale in the same place.
- The scale should be on a hard, flat surface, not on a rug or carpet.
- Weigh yourself at the same time each morning wearing either no clothing or your nightclothes.
- Record your weight in the log book as soon as you get off the scale.



Chapter 2

Medications for your Heart Failure

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Medications for your Heart Failure

It is very important to always take your medications as directed.

The following is information about the common medications prescribed for a person with heart failure. You may not be on all of these medications. Check with your doctor before taking any medications including over-the-counter medications and herbal supplements.

ACE Inhibitors

- ACE Inhibitors are medications that decrease the workload of your heart by relaxing your blood vessels. They also help you to pass more water and sodium in your urine.
- These medications can cause you to feel weak, dizzy, or have a dry cough. If you notice any of these symptoms tell your doctor.
- Talk with your doctor before taking any medications, including over-the-counter medications such as Advil, Motrin, or Aleve as these can interfere with your ACE Inhibitor.

Examples:

- Captopril (Capoten®)
- Enalapril (Vasotec®)
- Lisinopril (Prinivil®, Zestril®)

Angiotensin II Receptor Blockers (ARB) and Vasodilators

- If you are unable to take an ACE Inhibitor your doctor may prescribe either an ARB or a vasodilator.

Examples of ARBs:

- Losartan (Cozaar®)
- Valsartan (Diovan®)
- Candesartan (Atacand®)

Examples of vasodilators:

- Hydralazine (Apresoline®)
- Isosorbide dinitrate (Isordil®)
- Nitroglycerine (Nitro-Dur®)

Diuretics

- Diuretics, commonly called water pills, help your body to pass more urine. This decreases the amount of fluid in your body. By taking your diuretic as prescribed you should notice a decrease in the swelling in your body. You may also notice an improvement in your breathing.
- Some Diuretics also remove potassium (an electrolyte your heart needs to function correctly). Your doctor will do blood tests to check the amount of potassium in your body and to check how your kidneys are working. Your doctor may tell you to increase the amount of potassium in your diet or may prescribe you a potassium supplement.
- While taking your diuretic, if you notice fatigue, muscle cramping, dizziness, weight loss of more than two pounds, or weight gain of three or more pounds in 1-2 days, tell your doctor.

Examples of potassium rich foods:

- Fresh Fruit: bananas, oranges, cantaloupe, nectarines, mango
- Fresh Vegetables: avocados, asparagus, corn, carrots, kale, celery
- Dried Fruits: raisins, prunes, dates
- Dried Vegetables: peas, beans
- Fresh Meat: turkey, fish, beef

Examples of Diuretics:

- Bumetanide (Bumex®)
- Furosemide (Lasix®)
- Torsemide (Demadex®)
- Hydrochlorothiazide (HydroDIURIL®, HCTZ)
- Spironolactone (Aldactone®)

Beta Blockers and Beta- and Alpha Blockers

- Beta blockers and beta- and alpha blockers work by slowing the heart rate and lowering blood pressure.

Examples:

- Metoprolol succinate (Toprol®)
- Carvedilol (Coreg®)
- While taking this medication you should monitor your heart rate and blood pressure. Tell your doctor if your heart rate is less than 50 beats per minute.
- If at any time you feel dizzy, weak, or worsening heart failure symptoms, tell your doctor.

Digoxin (Lanoxin®)

- Digoxin works by making your heart beat more forcefully and at a slower rate.
- This medication can build up in your system and cause:
 - Loss of appetite, nausea or vomiting
 - Fatigue/drowsiness
 - Yellow or green tinted vision
 - Feeling like your heart is racing or like it has skipped a beat



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2 Gram Sodium Diet

1. **Limit sodium intake**
2. **Learn to read food labels**
3. **Eat a heart healthy diet**
4. **Achieve and maintain a healthy body weight**

Sodium is the mineral in the human body that helps to balance fluid volume. A low-sodium diet can help to control:

- High Blood Pressure (hypertension)
- Swelling and water build-up (edema)
- Shortness of breath

For people who have heart failure, the heart may not pump enough blood to meet the body's needs. Eating less sodium can help prevent fluid overload on the heart. The heart will not have to pump as hard if there is less fluid to move through the blood vessels.

You need to follow a low-sodium diet even if you do not have any symptoms, and/or if you are taking diuretic medication.

Note: A 2 g (gram) sodium diet is equal to 2000 mg (milligrams). One teaspoon of salt contains about 2300 mg of sodium.

You may not use a whole teaspoon of salt at the table or in cooking, but the total amount of sodium in many foods can add up. **You need to remove the salt shaker from the table and avoid using any salt when preparing food.** Other forms of salt, such as sea salt or celtic salt are similar to table salt and should be avoided.

“But, I never use the salt shaker...”

Sodium in our diet comes mainly from processed and convenience foods.

Processed foods make up the largest source of sodium in our diets. Processed foods include:

- Canned foods such as meats, fish, soups and vegetables
- Cured meats such as hot dogs, bacon, ham, sausage and deli meats
- Packaged-convenient foods such as instant potatoes, meal starters (Hamburger Helper®), instant cooked cereal, prepared mixes (pancakes, muffins and cornbread)
- Pre-seasoned mixes (tacos, chile, rice, noodles, sauces, gravy)
- Condiments such as soy sauce, steak or barbecue sauce, anything pickled or in a brine, salad dressing, ketchup, marinates
- Snack foods such as potato chips, pretzels, olives, cheese or pickles
- Prepared tomato, vegetable juices (V8®), sodas
- “Fast foods”, fried food and frozen meals (unless eating only one serving, having less than 400 mg of sodium)

Note: Sodium should be as low as possible, less than 140 mg per serving.

Food Label Terms

Food companies are allowed to use these claims to help highlight the amount of sodium per serving in certain foods:

Sodium Free	contains 5 mg or less
Very Low Sodium	contains 35 mg or less
Low Sodium	contains 140 mg or less
Reduced Sodium	at least 25% less sodium than usual (may still contain too much sodium)
No Salt Added	no salt was added during processing, but the product may still contain sodium by nature

What about Salt Substitutes?

Many salt substitutes are high in potassium, which may conflict with one or more of your medications. Too much potassium can also be harmful to your kidneys. It's better to avoid these substitutes. Use either a salt-free herb and spice blend (such as Mrs. Dash®) or make your own. See the recipe section for more information. **Be aware that sea salt, kosher salt and “lite salt” all contain high amounts of sodium and should also be avoided.**

Change Eating Habits to Lower Sodium

Look at the sodium content in the two menus below. By making a few food changes, you can really lower the amount of sodium. For example:

Choose	Instead of	Lowers Sodium by
Unsalted Peanut Butter	Regular Peanut Butter	50 mg
1 Cup Lowfat Yogurt	Pretzels	400 mg
Frozen Green Beans	Canned Green Beans	170 mg

Keep these low sodium key points in mind:

- Read labels and choose low sodium products.
- Buy fresh or frozen fruits and vegetables.
- Use no salt added canned goods.
- Use fresh poultry, fish, and meat; not deli or processed.
- Be careful with all processed foods.
- Cook with herbs and spices and salt free seasoning blends

When Eating Away from Home

One high sodium meal can mean a trip to the hospital for some people.

- Let friends and family know that you have to limit your salt and sodium intake.
- Choose restaurants that offer fresh foods.
- Ask that your order be prepared without added salt, MSG, soy sauce or butter.
- Ask for sauces to be served on the side. If sauces are salty, don't use them. Season your meal with lemon, pepper, and/or a little olive oil.
- Avoid fast food restaurants and convenience take-out foods which are prepared and preserved with sodium.

Choose Good Fats

Sodium Free does not mean Fat Free!
Fat Free does not mean Sodium Free!

We do need some fat in our diet, yet saturated fat and especially trans fats contribute to clogged arteries. These fats should be avoided.

Both mono-unsaturated and poly-unsaturated fats can help to lower your blood cholesterol and protect your heart.

All fats are high in calorie, so even the good fats should be used in moderation, less than 2-3 tablespoons daily.

See the table on the next page to be sure you are choosing the Good Fats. Note the effect that the different types of fats have on blood cholesterol levels.

Note:

LDL – “bad,” clogged arteries.

HDL – “good,” helps to lower LDL.

Type of Fat	Main Food Sources	Effect on Cholesterol Levels
Enjoy Mono-Unsaturated Fats in Moderation	olive oil, canola oil, peanut oil; most unsalted nuts, avocados	Lowers LDL Raises HDL GOOD!
Enjoy Poly-Unsaturated Fats in Moderation	corn, soybean, safflower, sunflower and cottonseed oils; almonds, walnuts, fish, ground flax	Lowers LDL Raises HDL GOOD!
Saturated Fats	whole and 2% milk, butter, cheese, and ice cream; red meat; coconuts, coconut milk, and coconut oil	Raises both LDL & HDL BAD!
Trans Fats or Partially Hydrogenated Fats	some margarines; vegetable shortening Crisco®; deep-fried foods; many fast foods; many commercial baked goods	Raises LDL Lowers HDL BAD!

Fluids...

You may be told to limit your fluid intake to six to eight 8 oz. glasses a day. This is about the same as 1.5 – 2 liters, or 1500-2000 mL's or cc's of fluid.

Fluid intake includes anything you drink such as:

- water
- coffee
- tea
- juice
- milk
- hot chocolate
- alcohol
- fluid from soups, popsicles and certain fruits

To get an idea of how much fluid you drink in a day, measure 1 cup (8 ounces) of water and see how much or how little that water fills one of your drinking glasses. Another way is to match every beverage you drink with the same amount of water. Pour the water into a pitcher to see how much fluid you have had by the end of the day. **The goal for fluid intake is to try to drink about the same amount every day.**

If you are on a fluid regulated diet, avoid excess caffeine (more than 2-3 cups). Caffeine is a diuretic that may cause too much fluid loss. Excess caffeine may also increase your heart rate.

Avoid sport drinks such as Gatorade because they are high in sodium (and calories).

Remember some of the signs and symptoms of fluid build-up:

- Puffy skin or edema in the ankles or legs
- Shortness of breath
- Pants or belts feeling tighter than normal

Do you drink enough?

If not, you are at risk for dehydration. Some symptoms of dehydration are:

- dry mouth
- you may feel weak or tired
- you may feel dizzy or lightheaded

Bottom Line:

Drink a total 6-8 cups of fluid each day.

Note: 1 cup = 8 ounces = 240 mL

Follow a 2 gram Sodium, Heart Healthy Diet



Mindful Eating

For some people, eating a heart healthy diet is easy. But for many others, it may be hard and takes practice. Some people eat without being hungry or thinking about health. Yet eating well helps to improve your health, and may help some of your medications to work better.

Think about the foods you choose to buy, order out, and eat. Take time to sit down, relax and enjoy the taste of your food and all the ingredients. Be aware of how much you are eating. Put your fork down between bites, taking the time to chew, swallow and enjoy each bite.

Eating well is a skill to learn. It is not about will power. Think about what food you choose to be around. Set up your environment to succeed. Don't bring salted nuts and other unhealthy foods in the house. Instead stock your kitchen with fresh fruits and vegetables, unsalted nuts or peanut butter, low fat dairy products and whole grain, low sodium crackers and cereals.

Activity and Exercise Guidelines

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Why Do I Need to Exercise?

Exercise can make a big difference in your health. Regular aerobic exercise (ex. walking) can, over time, help to improve your heart's function and keep your muscles strong.

Regular activity can make you feel better by:

- Giving you more energy
- Helping you to sleep better at night
- Building up your strength and endurance
- Making everyday tasks easier and less tiring
- Helping you to lose weight or maintain ideal weight
- Increasing your confidence
- Making it easier to cope with stress
- Improving mood, depression symptoms

What Types of Activities are Best?

Aerobic activity is the best type of exercise. Regular daily activity should be your goal. Your aerobic workout should be continuous, rhythmic activity that can be kept up over time. Walking and stationary bicycling are good examples of aerobic activities. Jogging, swimming, and other more vigorous activities should only be done after consulting with your doctor.

Activities to avoid unless recommended by your doctor are:

- Isometrics: contracting and holding a muscle or muscle group.
- Calisthenics: military style exercises
- Heavy weight lifting



Exercise Tips

Many heart failure patients find they have more energy in the morning. Others find planning a rest period before or after the exercise is helpful. Waiting an hour after meals before exercising is helpful. Before exercising, take time to “warm up.” This helps to get your blood flowing to your muscles and stretching exercises keep your muscles flexible.

Slow and Steady is the Goal

Whether you can do 5 minutes or 20 minutes in the beginning doesn't matter - it is still making a difference! Stop exercising when you feel too tired or out of breath to continue. Over time, you should be able to exercise for longer periods of time, and push yourself a little harder.

How Do I Know How Hard to Push Myself?

It is normal to breathe a bit heavier and to feel like you are working a bit harder than usual when exercising, BUT.... never push so hard that you have trouble catching your breath or that your leg muscles or body feel like they are going to give out on you. If you cannot talk in full sentences while you are exercising, you are doing too much. Slow down!

Do not exercise if your weight is up and you are short of breath, or if you are not feeling well.

Stop Exercising Immediately if You Feel:

- Pressure or pain in your chest, neck, arm or shoulder
- Dizziness, lightheadedness or nausea
- Unusual shortness of breath
- Unusual tiredness
- Heartbeat that is too fast, too slow or skipping a beat
- Any other symptoms that cause you concern

Let the doctor know if these symptoms occur.

Call your doctor or seek medical attention immediately if these symptoms do not go away after stopping the activity.



Sexual Activity

- Sex does not strain the heart any more than climbing two flights of stairs!
- If the patient is feeling well and can perform everyday activities without discomfort, there is no reason to avoid sexual relations.
- Some heart failure medications can affect sexual desire.
- Please feel comfortable to bring up concerns or problems related to sexual activity with your health care team.

Contact Us

Please call if you have any questions, or if you experience any symptoms from exercise or sexual activity. (603) 650-5724

