



# Guide to Heart Failure

A Toolkit for Patients, Families, and Caregivers

# Important Contacts

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## Primary Contact

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

## Primary Physician

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

## Cardiologist

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

## Pulmonologist

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

## Nephrologist

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Dialysis Center: \_\_\_\_\_

## Other Doctors

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

## Local Hospital

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

## Pharmacy

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

## Friends, Family Members, and Other Caregivers

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

## Visiting Nurse Agency

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

## Heart Failure Coordinator Doylestown Hospital

215.345.2917

## Doylestown Home Health and Hospice

215.345.2202

## Doylestown Health Palliative Care

215.345.2535

## Doylestown Health Nutrition Services Doylestown Hospital Pavilion

215.345.2356

## Health and Wellness Center

215.918.5701 or 215.918.5702

# You Can Live Well with Heart Failure!

You have been given this book because you are here in the hospital with heart failure or you may have had heart failure in the past. While this may sound overwhelming, with the right treatment, heart failure can be controlled. With the right medicine, changes to your diet, and other forms of treatment, you can learn to manage your condition and improve your quality of life. This book will help you understand your heart failure and treatment plan. It will teach you to take care of yourself so you feel your best and stay out of the hospital. It will not replace visits with your health care team, but it will allow you to take better care of yourself between visits.

## What Is Heart Failure?

Heart Failure occurs when the heart is weak or stiff and has trouble pumping blood and oxygen to the rest of the body. This may lead to a backup of fluid into the lungs, legs, arms, and other parts of the body. These problems can lead to the symptoms you feel.



**PLACE A CHECKMARK** next to any **symptoms** you have had in the past.

**PLACE A CHECKMARK** next to any of the **causes of heart failure** that might describe your condition.

## What Are the Symptoms of Heart Failure?

You may have many symptoms, or only a few. Here are the most common symptoms:

- Shortness of breath, wheezing, or coughing either at rest or with activity
- Swelling of the legs, ankles and feet, abdomen, and arms
- Abdominal bloating or decreased appetite
- Rapid weight gain
- Fatigue
- Problems breathing when you are lying flat, or the need to sleep in a recliner or propped up on pillows
- Waking up at night coughing or short of breath

## What Causes It?

- Coronary artery disease (blockage of arteries) and prior heart attacks
- High blood pressure
- Heart valve disease
- Heart rhythm disorders including atrial fibrillation
- Diabetes
- Obesity
- Side effects of toxic drugs such as chemotherapy
- Smoking, alcohol, or illicit drug use
- Inherited heart problem
- Viruses
- Sometimes, the cause is unknown

# My Diet, Fluid, and Exercise Plan

## My Sodium Goal

- » No more than **2,000 – 3,000 mg of sodium per day**. Talk with my doctor to decide what sodium amount is best for me.
- » Aim for **500 – 750 mg or less of sodium per meal** (most people eat 3 meals and one snack per day).
- » Buy foods that are low in sodium and have **less than 140mg sodium per serving** on the nutrition label.

## My Fluid Goal

My doctor may recommend a fluid restriction of about **48 ounces of fluid per day** (6 cups of fluid per day. 1 cup = 8 ounces). Talk with my doctor to decide what fluid amount is best for me.

## Daily Weights

I should weigh myself first thing every morning after urinating, but before eating or drinking. I should record my weights, and remember that it is best to weigh myself without clothes or with the same amount each time. I will place my scale on a flat surface with no carpet. **I need to call my doctor for a weight gain of 2-3 pounds in 24 hours or 5 pounds in one week.** Use weight log on page 6 for use at home.

## Knowing My Heart Failure Zone

I should follow my heart failure zone plan, on page 5, every day to recognize any changes in symptoms and know when to call the doctor or go to the emergency room.

## My Exercise Goal

Walking and other forms of light to moderate exercise can be good for my heart and overall health. I should talk with my doctor and set an exercise plan.

## Follow Up With My Health Care Providers

**My next follow up appointments are:**

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**It is up to you and your loved ones to pay attention to how you feel every single day.**

Being aware of your baselines is an important way to manage your heart condition. If a problem occurs, you can get help before it gets worse. As long as your symptoms stay about the same every day, your heart failure is stable. But if symptoms get worse, *it is time to take action!*



### MY BASELINES (when I am feeling well)

I normally weigh: \_\_\_\_\_

My belt buckle usually fits into the \_\_\_\_\_ hole.

I can walk from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ before getting short of breath (e.g. I can walk from my chair to the bathroom before getting short of breath).

I can climb \_\_\_\_\_ stairs before getting short of breath.

Other baselines: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# Heart Failure Zones: How Do I Feel Today?

	 <b>Green Zone</b> IN CONTROL	 <b>Yellow Zone</b> CAUTION	 <b>Red Zone</b> EMERGENCY
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Take medicines</li> <li>» Weigh self every day</li> <li>» Follow low-salt diet</li> <li>» If told to limit fluids, do so every day</li> <li>» Keep all doctor's appointments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Take action <b>TODAY!</b></li> <li>» Call your home health nurse</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Call your doctor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Take action <b>NOW!</b></li> <li>» Call your doctor now</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» <b>CALL 911</b> if you have any chest pain that does not go away or you feel you cannot breathe</li> </ul>
<b>Is my weight up?</b> My healthy weight: _____	No change in my weight.	Yes, my weight is up: » 2-3 pounds overnight » 5 pounds since last week	Yes, my weight is up: » 5 pounds overnight
<b>Do I have swelling?</b>	No, I do not have swelling.	Yes, I have swelling in my: » Feet, ankles, or shins » Knees or thighs	Yes, I have swelling in my: » Belly. I feel bloated or my pants are tighter » Hands or face
<b>Am I short of breath?</b>	No, I do not feel short of breath: » Breathing is normal » Sleep is normal	Yes, I feel short of breath or cough while: » Walking or talking » Eating » Bathing or dressing » Lying flat	Yes, I feel: » Short of breath or wheeze at rest » Less alert and more confused » I need to sleep sitting up to breathe
<b>How is my energy level?</b>	My energy level is normal.	I am too tired to do most of my normal activities.	I am so tired I can hardly do any normal activities.
<b>My other signs of heart failure:</b>	None	None	» Chest pain or pressure that does not go away (call 911) » Cannot breathe (call 911)



# Following a Low-Sodium/Salt Diet



Sodium (salt) attracts water and causes the body to retain fluid. This causes swelling and forces your heart to work harder. It is important to follow a low-salt diet every day. Even one high-salt meal can make you retain fluid and increase the risk of being hospitalized.

It is recommended that you eat no more than 2,000 – 3,000 mg of sodium in a day. This is equal to about 500 – 750 mg of sodium per meal.

Removing the salt shaker is the first step. Be aware that salt is hidden in many of our foods. In fact 77% of our daily sodium intake comes from what is already IN food.

**Just 1 teaspoon of salt is equal to your entire daily limit!**



## Tips to Lower Your Sodium Intake at Home

- » Read nutrition labels. Buy foods that have less than 140 mg of sodium per serving.
- » Avoid processed foods such as processed cheeses and meats.
- » Remove the salt shaker from the table and the stove. Replace with other seasonings and spices.
- » Don't salt cooking water or add salt to your cooking.
- » Use fresh or plain frozen vegetables.
- » If you use high-sodium condiments and salad dressings, dip your fork in them instead of pouring them on food.
- » Use spice blends like Mrs. Dash® or create your own spice blend (see recipe in resource packet).

## Tips for Eating at Restaurants

- » Choose baked, broiled, grilled, poached, roasted, or steamed foods.
- » Limit breading, butter, or sauces. Or ask for them on the side.
- » Skip the bread basket.
- » Eat half of your meal. Save leftovers for the next day.
- » Use fresh lemon or pepper to flavor vegetables, salads, or baked potatoes.
- » Go easy on salad dressing. Have it on the side. Use olive oil and vinegar instead which is sodium free.
- » Ask for no salt added.
- » Stay away from fast food restaurants.



It is recommended that I have **no more than:** \_\_\_\_\_ **mg of sodium**  
**in a day**, which is about \_\_\_\_\_ **mg of sodium per meal.**

# Tips for Grocery Shopping

- » **SHOP FOR FRESH FOODS.** Fresh produce, fresh meats, chicken and fish, low-fat dairy products, and plain frozen vegetables and fruits are often lower in sodium. They are found in the outside aisles of the store. The center aisles at the grocery store often contain foods higher in sodium.
- » If you buy canned foods, check the nutrition label for sodium content.
- » Try the organic aisle for different low-sodium options on breads, soups, and some sauces.
- » Use our Low-Sodium Grocery List (in resource packet) as a guide to help you shop.
- » **Be aware of food label traps!** Just because something says it is “Heart Healthy” or “Reduced Sodium” does not always mean it is low-sodium. Reading the nutrition label facts is the only real way to find out how much sodium the food contains.

## How to Read a Nutritional Label

- 1) Look at the **servicing size**
- 2) Look at the **sodium per serving**
- 3) Choose foods with **less than 140 mg sodium per serving**

**\*This food has 40 mg sodium in 1/2 cup. This food is a good choice!**

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 1/2 cup (about 82g)	
Servings Per Container 8	
Amount Per Serving	
<b>Calories</b> 200	Calories from Fat 130
% Daily Value*	
<b>Total Fat</b> 14g	<b>22%</b>
Saturated Fat 0g	0%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 55mg	18%
<b>Sodium</b> 40mg	<b>2%</b>
Total Carbohydrate 17g	6%
Dietary Fiber 1g	4%
Sugars 14g	
<b>Protein</b> 3g	
Vitamin A 10%	Vitamin C 0%
Calcium 10%	Iron 6%

\*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.

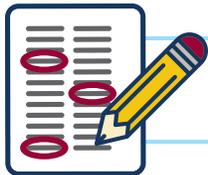
## Understanding Food Packaging

Salt/Sodium Free*	Less than 5 mg sodium per serving
Very Low Sodium*	35 mg or less per serving
Low Sodium*	140 mg or less per serving
No Salt Added or Unsalted*	No salt added during food processing, but may still contain natural sodium. Check the nutrition label for sodium amount.
Light in Sodium or Lightly Salted	Sodium is reduced by at least 50% per serving
Reduced Sodium	At least 25% less sodium than the original product

Just because something is reduced sodium does not mean that it is always a low-sodium food. For example, reduced sodium soy sauce often still has greater than 600 mg of sodium per 2 tablespoon serving.

# What Foods Can I Choose Instead?

People who have heart failure often feel that their diets are very limited due to their sodium restriction. But this isn't true. There is so much that you CAN eat and enjoy! Here is a list of a few switches you can make to allow yourself the same types of foods you crave without all the added salt!



**CIRCLE SOME THINGS** you might want to try.

BREAKFAST	If You Often Eat	Try Instead
	Packaged breakfast pastries or frozen waffles and pancakes	Toasted low-sodium bread with 2 tablespoons low sodium peanut butter
	Salted butter	Unsalted butter or jam
	Omelette/scrambled eggs with sausage, bacon, and cheese	Omelette/scrambled eggs with sauteed vegetables and swiss cheese
	Flavored cooked cereal in packets	Plain cooked cereal with fresh fruit or cinnamon
	Frozen hash browns	Fresh hash browns or a low-sodium brand
	Bagel with cream cheese	English muffin with 2 tablespoons low-sodium peanut butter
	Fast food breakfast sandwich	English muffin, 2 eggs, swiss cheese, 1 slice low-sodium bacon

LUNCH	If You Often Eat	Try Instead
	Pickles	Cucumber slices dipped in vinegar
	Peanut butter	Unsalted peanut butter or almond butter
	Lunch meat	Baked chicken or turkey sliced, or tuna from a can in water
	Processed cheese (American); or a grilled cheese sandwich	Sliced swiss cheese or fresh mozzarella in smaller amounts on low-sodium bread
	Potato salad or coleslaw	Garden salad with olive oil and vinegar
	Saltine crackers	Low-sodium crackers
	Chips or french fries	Unsalted pretzels, nuts or chips

If You Often Eat	Try Instead
Table salt (for cooking)	Lemon, garlic, pepper, spices, low-sodium spice mixes
Soy sauce (for cooking)	Sesame or peanut oil
Bottled salad dressing	Olive oil, vinegar, and herbs
Frozen or boxed potatoes	Boiled or baked potatoes with unsalted butter
Boxed rice mix with seasoning packet	White or brown rice with your own low-sodium seasoning
Canned vegetables or beans	Frozen, fresh, or No Salt Added canned vegetables or beans
Ham	Roast Pork
Smoked turkey	Roasted fresh turkey or chicken
Canned or bottled spaghetti sauce	Homemade sauce from low-sodium canned or fresh tomatoes
Pizza	Make your own pizza with sauce as above and fresh mozzarella, vegetables, and herbs
Crabmeat, shrimp, oysters, and other shellfish	Baked, broiled, steamed, or grilled fresh fish (tilapia, salmon, catfish, etc) or shellfish in very small portions. Season with lemon juice and olive oil instead of butter and sauces or breading.



**WRITE A LIST** of three different seasonings that are good to use on your food instead of using salt:

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) \_\_\_\_\_



**CIRCLE ALL OF THE ITEMS** below that are high in sodium:

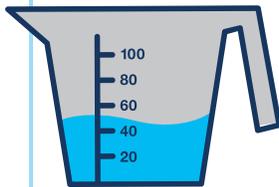
- |                   |                 |                |             |
|-------------------|-----------------|----------------|-------------|
| Gatorade          | Roasted Chicken | Canned Soups   | Bacon       |
| Macaroni & Cheese | Soy Sauce       | Grilled Salmon | Lunch Meats |
| Salad Dressings   | Hot Dogs        | Fresh Fruit    | Pickles     |

Answers: Gatorade, Roasted Chicken, Canned Soups, Bacon, Macaroni & Cheese, Soy Sauce, Grilled Salmon, Lunch Meats, Salad Dressings, Hot Dogs, Fresh Fruit, Pickles

# If You Are Told to Limit Fluid

People with decreased heart function tend to retain fluid in their body. Normally, extra fluid is filtered out of the body by the kidneys and is made into urine. This does not happen as well when the heart is not working properly. Your doctor may tell you to limit your fluid intake to 48 ounces per day. Ask your health care provider if you should be on a fluid restriction, and if so, how much per day.

**A fluid is anything that is liquid at room temperature. This includes:**



- » Ice (1 cup of ice cubes = ½ cup of water)
- » Water
- » Juice
- » Soda
- » Milk
- » Coffee/Tea
- » Soup
- » Gravy
- » Jello/Pudding
- » Ice Cream/Sherbert
- » Popsicles
- » Watermelon (98% water)

## Tips for Controlling Fluid Intake

- » Drink ONLY when thirsty
- » Space your liquids out over the entire day
- » Suck on an ice cube
- » Use small cups and glasses
- » Use a mouth rinse like Biotene™ to decrease symptoms of dry mouth
- » If possible, take medicines with mealtime liquids
- » Chew on sugar-free gum or suck on sugar free candy
- » Suck on lemon drops or lemon wedges
- » Keep frozen grapes in freezer and suck on them instead of drinking

## Tips for Measuring Fluid Intake

- » Fill a container with the same amount of water as your daily fluid goal. Each time you have any kind of fluid, pour out the same amount of water from the container. This will help you know when you've reached your daily limit.
- » Use a measuring cup to stay within daily fluid goals.
- » Measure the size of your drinking cup and coffee cup and count how many times you fill them each day.



**MY FLUID GOAL** is no more than \_\_\_\_\_ ounces of fluid per day.

# What About Alcohol?

You may be told to reduce the amount of alcohol you drink, even if you don't need to limit other fluids. Too much alcohol damages the heart muscle. If your heart failure was caused by alcohol, you will be told to abstain from drinking any alcohol. In other cases, alcohol may be okay in small amounts. Talk to your doctor about what is right for you.

# What About Smoking?

If you smoke, quitting is one of the most important things you can do to improve your health. Quitting reduces your chances of heart attack, cancer, stroke, and other severe lung diseases. Quitting smoking is not easy, but many people have done it before. You can too!

**Make a "Quit Plan."** This takes patience. Think about your triggers and how you will cope with these. Think about whom you will ask for support, or join a support group. Talk to your health care provider about products to help you quit smoking.

## What Is Nicotine Addiction?

Nicotine is an addictive drug. It causes changes in the brain that make people want to use it more. Addictive drugs cause unpleasant symptoms.

## What Does Nicotine Do to the Body?

- » Increases blood pressure
- » Increases heart rate
- » Increases the flow of blood from the heart
- » Causes arteries to narrow

## Carbon Monoxide Is a By-product of Smoke. What Does it Do?

- » Reduces the amount of oxygen the blood can carry
- » Damages the inner walls of the arteries
- » Encourages the fatty buildup in the arteries
- » Causes the blood vessels to narrow and harden
- » Causes changes in the clotting of the blood, making heart attack more likely

## Find your Motivation! It Is Different for Everyone.

- » Your life will be healthier and you may live longer.
- » You can benefit from quitting, even if you have smoked for many years.
- » Your risk of heart attacks, cancer and stroke will decrease.
- » Quitting smoking will improve the air quality of those around you and help keep them healthy.
- » You will have extra money to spend on items other than cigarettes.

### Smoking Cessation Resources

- » **Smoke Free Government Website:** [smokefree.gov](http://smokefree.gov)
- » **American Lung Association:** [lungusa.org](http://lungusa.org)

#### » Group Counseling:

- » **Clearing the Air:** 215.710.2264
- » **Quit Now:** 1.800.QUIT.NOW
- » **Determined to Quit:** [determinedtoquit.com](http://determinedtoquit.com)

# Living with a Chronic Condition

Having a heart condition such as heart failure may create new concerns and challenges in your life. Use this section to help you: keep up with the activities that matter to you, take care of your emotional health, and prepare for the future.

## How Can I Manage my Emotional Health?

It's normal to feel sad or down at times. Coping with a chronic health problem is hard. Try to focus on one day at a time. Don't be afraid to ask for help.

### Strategies for Staying in Control:

- » Find a hobby.
- » Try yoga or meditation.
- » Stay connected with friends and family.
- » Listen to music or read a book.
- » Join a support group (information about support group in resource packet).
- » Talk to your health care provider if you feel down most days or are having problems with appetite or sleep, as these are signs of depression. Treatment for depression can help you feel better and may help your overall health improve as well.

## How Can I Conserve My Energy?

- » Stop and rest when you feel tired. Do not wait until fatigued.
- » Plan out each day. Try to accomplish one or two things with rest in between.
- » Use a rolling cart for lifting or pushing heavy things like cleaning supplies and laundry.
- » Try to sit down as often as you can while cleaning, folding laundry or other household tasks.
- » To lower your risk of feeling faint, avoid hot or cold showers. Leave a window or door open while showering to avoid humidity.
- » Get 6-8 hours of sleep per night. Take rest time during the day.

## Can I Still Socialize with Family and Friends?

Of course! Being with family and friends at parties often involves eating. Plan ahead and bring your own low sodium dish if it is a potluck. Enjoy the fresh fruit and vegetable platters and have a small bite of one of the more risky side dishes. Remember, you are with people who love you and will be okay if you politely say, "That looks great, but my doctor says I can't eat salt."

## Can I Still Travel?

Yes! You just have to plan ahead. Make sure you travel with enough medicine. Pack these in your carry-on. Talk to your health care provider and plan what you should do if you notice any swelling or weight gain while you are away. Make sure it is okay with your doctor if you fly in an airplane. The same daily guidelines apply when you are away on vacation:

- » Continue to weigh yourself daily if you are able to. Pack a portable scale! If not, pay very close attention to any changes in symptoms. Do not wait until the end of your vacation to notify a doctor if you notice any symptoms.
- » Stick to your low-sodium diet on vacation.
- » Continue to take your medicines at the same time as usual.

# Living with a Chronic Condition, *continued*

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## Can I Stay Intimate with My Partner?

In most cases, heart failure should not interfere with sexual activity. If you can climb two flights of stairs, you should be able to engage in sexual activity. It is normal for people with heart failure to become less interested in sexual activity or have less sexual pleasure. This can be due to:

- » Decreased blood supply to the body
- » Side effects from some medicines
- » Fears or concerns about the heart during sex

### Tips to help you stay intimate:

- » Wait until you are well rested.
- » Use positions that require less energy, like side lying or on your back.
- » If you feel discomfort, stop and rest.
- » Talk to your health care provider if you have any concerns about your sexual activity. ***It is not safe to stop or start taking medicines due to sexual concerns. Talk with your doctor first.***

## Discussions About Planning Ahead

Depending on how far along your illness has progressed, you may be ready to ask your doctor about ways to help with symptom management and quality of life. This may include visiting nurses, outpatient palliative care services, or hospice. Please talk with your doctor or nurse if you feel you are ready to learn more about these options as you begin to look ahead.

If you would like to create an advance healthcare directive or make changes to your current one, you can ask us for help. We have forms and more information on the Doylestown Health website [DoylestownHealth.org](http://DoylestownHealth.org). Advance healthcare directive forms are also available from community programs and internet search engines.

# Common Tests for Heart Failure

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- » **Laboratory blood work:** To check drug levels, chemistry, blood counts, etc.
- » **Prothrombin Time (INR):** To check blood thinning effects from warfarin (Coumadin).
- » **Chest X-ray:** To check for fluid in the lungs.
- » **Echocardiogram:** To see how well the heart pumps and examine heart valves. Best way to measure your Ejection Fraction (the volume of blood ejected from the heart with each heart beat: normal is 60%).
- » **Exercise Stress Testing:** To check for coronary artery blockages.
- » **Cardiac Catheterization:** To check for coronary artery blockages, heart pressures, and blood flow to vital organs.
- » **Cardiopulmonary Stress Testing (VO2):** To assess exercise tolerance and effectiveness of medicines.

# Most Commonly Used Heart Failure Medicines

Types of Medicine	What They Do	Possible Side Effects	Important to Know
<b>ACE Inhibitor, ARB, ARNi</b> Your medicine: _____	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» lowers blood pressure</li> <li>» reduces strain on the heart</li> <li>» makes it easier for the heart to pump</li> <li>» improves blood flow</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» low blood pressure</li> <li>» dizziness</li> <li>» dry cough</li> <li>» change in kidney function</li> <li>» too much potassium in the body</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» dose starts low and increases slowly over time</li> <li>» need to have blood tests to check potassium levels and kidney function</li> <li>» get medical help right away if mouth, lips, or tongue become swollen</li> </ul>
<b>Beta Blocker</b> Your medicine: _____	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» lowers blood pressure</li> <li>» slows heart rate</li> <li>» may strengthen heart's pumping action over time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» low blood pressure</li> <li>» dizziness</li> <li>» low heart rate</li> <li>» depression</li> <li>» tiredness</li> <li>» sexual dysfunction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» dose will increase over time</li> <li>» do not stop this medicine suddenly</li> <li>» call your health care provider if you have side effects</li> </ul>
<b>Diuretic</b> Your medicine: _____ <i>*Also called "water pills."</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» helps rid the body of excess water</li> <li>» reduces swelling</li> <li>» may improve breathing</li> <li>» reduces work for the heart</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» frequent urination</li> <li>» potassium/magnesium/sodium loss</li> <li>» kidney problems</li> <li>» low blood pressure</li> <li>» high blood sugar</li> <li>» dizziness</li> <li>» gout</li> <li>» impotence</li> <li>» dehydration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» dose changes by how much fluid is retained</li> <li>» a potassium supplement may be needed (if told by your health care provider)</li> </ul>
<b>Aldosterone Antagonist</b> Your medicine: _____	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» alters hormones that damage the heart</li> <li>» reduces strain on the heart</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» changes kidney function</li> <li>» low blood pressure</li> <li>» breast swelling, tenderness (in both men and women)</li> <li>» too much potassium in the body</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» need to have blood tests to check potassium levels</li> <li>» if potassium levels are high, you may need to avoid or limit high-potassium foods</li> </ul>
<b>Sodium-glucose cotransporter 2 Inhibitor (SGLT2i)</b> Your medicine: _____	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» reduces heart failure hospitalizations and cardiac death</li> <li>» helps protect kidney function</li> <li>» blocks reabsorption of excess glucose</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» increased/frequent urination</li> <li>» lower blood pressure</li> <li>» dizziness</li> <li>» weight loss</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» this medicine can increase your risks of urinary and genital infections.</li> <li>» wash your genital area front to back using a washcloth or disposable wipe with soap and water twice per day.</li> <li>» if you have type II diabetes your blood sugar may be lower. Call your provider if having signs of low blood sugar.</li> </ul>
<b>Digoxin</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» slows heart rate</li> <li>» strengthens heart's pumping action</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» slow heart rate if drug amount too high</li> <li>» yellow tinted vision</li> <li>» loss of appetite</li> <li>» stomach pain</li> <li>» nausea/vomiting/diarrhea</li> <li>» heart rhythm problems</li> <li>» tiredness or weakness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» blood levels of the drug may need to be checked</li> <li>» call your health care provider if you have side effects</li> </ul>
<b>Hydralazine and Nitrate</b> Your medicine: _____	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» lowers blood pressure</li> <li>» reduces work for the heart</li> <li>» dilates blood vessels</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» low blood pressure</li> <li>» dizziness</li> <li>» fast heart rate</li> <li>» headache</li> <li>» leg swelling</li> <li>» nausea and vomiting</li> <li>» flushed skin</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» call your health care provider if you have side effects</li> </ul>
<b>Anticoagulants</b> Your medicine: _____	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» thins blood</li> <li>» lowers the risk of forming clots</li> <li>» lowers your risk of stroke</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» risk for bruising</li> <li>» risk of bleeding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» will need to have frequent blood testing</li> <li>» some anticoagulants do not require frequent testing</li> <li>» notify your health care provider immediately if you have excessive bruising, bleeding, or have a fall</li> </ul>

\*\*\* It is important to speak with your doctor before using non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) such as ibuprofen, naproxen, or by trade names Advil, Motrin, and Aleve. NSAIDs may cause unwanted side effects such as fluid retention.\*\*\*

# What Is Cardiac Rehabilitation and Why Is it Important to Me?

Cardiac Rehab is a medically supervised program that helps to improve your heart health if you have had a heart attack, heart failure, stent, or heart surgery.

Many people find these programs very helpful after they get out of the hospital. Cardiac rehab will allow you to exercise at a level that is safe and effective as well as help to make healthy lifestyle changes.

## During Your Rehabilitation Program You Will:

- » Have an evaluation to determine and provide an exercise program just for you.
- » Have options for exercise such as a treadmill, rowing machine, ellipticals, or bikes.
- » Be monitored by highly trained nurses or exercise physiologists for a change in your symptoms.
- » Start slow and follow a safe program that gradually helps you get stronger.
- » Begin weight training, if your doctor says you can.
- » Have your heart rate, blood pressure, EKG, and body composition monitored.

## Cardiac Rehab Can:

- ✓ Lower your chance of a return to the hospital, a second heart attack or heart surgery.
- ✓ Decrease your risk of dying or having a future cardiac event.
- ✓ Lessen chest pain.
- ✓ Decrease your need for medicines with your doctor's approval.
- ✓ Control risk factors like high blood pressure and cholesterol.
- ✓ Improve your endurance.
- ✓ Help with weight loss.



## Can I Still Remain Physically Active?

Yes! You may have less energy sometimes. Most people with heart failure have days that are better than others. Physical activity every day is good for your heart. Here are some tips:

- » Use a fitness watch to track your steps each day.
- » Start slow and gradually build up activity every day.
- » Aerobic activity is best (walking or biking).
- » Weight training is helpful. Start with light intensity. Gradually build to moderate level.
- » Give yourself plenty of rest in between and stop exercising if tired.
- » If exercising makes you too tired to perform any other tasks for the rest of the day, decrease the intensity and duration of your workout.
- » You can try smaller durations, 5-10 minutes, of exercise throughout the day.
- » Try to slowly reach a goal of 20-30 minutes each day.

**TALK TO YOUR HEALTH CARE PROVIDER. Enroll in a cardiac rehab program TODAY!**

Contact Doylestown Health's Cardiac Rehabilitation Program at 215.345.2390.

# Important Health Information



Allergies: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Medical Conditions: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Surgeries: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Last Echocardiogram: \_\_\_\_\_

My Ejection Fraction: (percentage of blood that is pumped out with each heart beat; normal range is 50-70%.) \_\_\_\_\_

Creatinine: (blood test for kidney function) \_\_\_\_\_

## Resources

### Heart Failure Support Groups

For more information on support groups at Doylestown Health, call **215.345.2328** or visit **DoylestownHealth.org/SupportGroups**.

You can join the **AHA (American Heart Association) Support Network** and connect with patients like you or find more resources at **supportnetwork.heart.org/connect-with-people-like-me/heart/heart-failure/**

### Heart Failure Information:

- » Heart Failure Society of America: **HFSA.org**
- » American Heart Association: **Heart.org**
- » American Association of Heart Failure Nurses: **AAHFN.org**
- » CardioSmart: **CardioSmart.org**
- » **DoylestownHealth.org/HeartFailure**







## Friends of the Heart Institute

Doylestown Health's Friends of the Heart Institute is a caring, all-volunteer group whose mission is to:

- » Generate financial support for state-of-the-art cardiac care at Doylestown Hospital
- » Provide support for Doylestown Health's cardiac patients and their families
- » Encourage heart-healthy lifestyles
- » Develop and present community educational programs and literature

Your membership in Friends of the Heart Institute is a tax-deductible gift that will touch the lives of thousands who turn to Doylestown Health for heart care.

To learn more about how you can become a "friend" and support this important mission, call **215.345.2009** or visit **[DoylestownHealthFoundation.org/Friends](https://DoylestownHealthFoundation.org/Friends)**.



Patient and Family Education Committee 4/2023

**[DoylestownHealth.org/Heart](https://DoylestownHealth.org/Heart)**