

Heart Failure Health Log

This chart will help you keep track of your health “numbers.”

Bring it to your next doctor visit.

Doctor's Exam	Date	My Goal	Date	Finding	Date	Finding
Blood Pressure						
Total Cholesterol						
LDL Cholesterol						
HDL Cholesterol						
Weight						

Know the Warning Signs of Heart Failure

Ask your doctor to help you fill in these numbers.

I'll call my doctor if:

- I gain _____ pounds overnight, or _____ pounds in _____ days.
- I feel tired or weak.
- I have shortness of breath, especially lying down or with activity.
- I have swelling in my feet, ankles or stomach.
- I feel dizzy or faint when standing up quickly.

Sources

1. American Heart Association. Medications commonly used to treat heart failure. Available at www.heart.org. Accessed October 2008.
2. McGlynn, EA, et al. The quality of health care delivered to adults in the United States. *New England Journal of Medicine*. 2003; 348:2635-2645.

The information provided in these materials is for informational purposes only and is not a substitute for your doctor's care. Please talk with your doctor about it. Your personal health information is kept private based on your plan's privacy policy. Some services may not be covered under your benefit plan. Please check your benefits.

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UnitedHealthcare Insurance Company



Taking Charge of Your Heart Failure



Vaccinations		Date
Pneumococcal (pneumonia) ask your doctor		
Influenza (flu) yearly	Date	Notes
	Date	Notes

Questions to ask your doctor

Be prepared for your next doctor visit. Bring a list of questions. These can get you started. Add your own to this list:

- Am I taking the best type of medicines for my heart failure?
- Are there medicines I should take when my symptoms get worse?
- When do I need to call your office? For which symptoms? For how much weight gain?
- What is the goal for my blood pressure? The goal for my pulse?
- What is the goal for my total cholesterol? For my HDL? For my LDL?
- Do I need to eat special foods?
- How much should I exercise each day? What exercises are safe for me?



NOTES:



**Take charge of your health. Learn as much as you can.
It's one of the most important things you can do for yourself.**

Heart failure means that your heart has become weak. It doesn't pump the way it should. In most cases, heart failure is caused by another health problem. High blood pressure, hardening of the arteries or past heart attacks are just a few of the causes.

Take charge

Welcome to Taking Charge of Your Heart Failure. If you have heart failure, you may have questions. What is heart failure? What medicines treat it? How do I avoid having symptoms?

You may wonder — what signs mean my heart failure is getting worse? And, what can I do about it?

Don't let these questions worry you. We can help you learn about heart failure. And, that can help you take charge of your health.

This guide can help you:

- Learn more about medicines that can help heart failure.
- Understand why it's important to weigh yourself every day.
- Know the signs of heart failure.
- Know what action to take — and when to take action if your symptoms get worse.
- Know what questions to ask your doctor.

Don't miss the back of this booklet. Tear out the Health Log. Use it to keep track of your health information. Be sure to bring it with you to your next doctor visit.

Heart failure medicines

If you have heart failure, your doctor may tell you to take one or more medicines. It's important to know what they are and what they do.

ACE inhibitor or angiotensin-receptor blocker (ARB)

Relaxes your blood vessels. That makes it easier for the heart to pump.

Beta-blocker. Lowers blood pressure. It also slows the heart rate. That means the heart doesn't have to work so hard. Beta-blockers lower the risk of death from a heart attack.

Diuretic. Helps get rid of water and sodium through your kidneys. Using this medicine helps you have less swelling. It also helps you breathe easier.

Some people with heart failure also take:

Digoxin. Makes the heart beat stronger and pump more blood. It also slows the heart rate.

Has your doctor told you to take one or more of these medicines? If not, ask why. They may help you.



Taking your medicines

Take care of your heart by taking your medicines.

Here are some tips that may help:

Remember to take your medicine:

- Use a pill reminder box. Fill it at the start of each week.
- Set an alarm. Use a clock, your watch or cell phone.
- Start a "medicine record." Write down your medicines in a notebook. List the times you need to take each one.

Know your medicines:

- Keep a list of all of your medicines with you. Add any new medicines to the list.
- Ask your doctor what each medicine does. Write it down in your medicine record.
- Do you take more medicine when you have symptoms? Write that down in your record, too.

Don't let your medications run out:

- Don't forget to refill your medicine. Do so about five days before you run out.
- Does your drugstore let you order a refill by phone or online? Be sure to ask. That might be easier for you. Also, ask if they have automatic refills with reminders.

Read this MEDICINE SAFETY note!

It's very dangerous to make any changes to your medicines if your doctor doesn't know about it.

Don't change the amount you take. Don't stop taking them. Only make changes when your doctor says to.

Your primary doctor

Do you have a primary doctor? This is a doctor you see for all of your health concerns. If you don't have one, you should get one. You can choose a doctor that's in your health plan's network. Need help finding one? Look at the back of your health plan member ID card. Call the Customer Service number. They can help you find one.

A primary doctor can help you manage your heart failure. But, you need to work as a team. Tell your doctor about how you're feeling. Listen carefully, and ask questions.

The more you work together, the better your doctor will be able to treat your heart failure.



What kind of doctor should I see?

- Primary care doctor. You see this doctor for all types of health concerns. He or she often manages heart failure, too.
- Heart doctor (cardiologist). This is a specialist. You may be referred to this type of doctor, if needed. That will depend on how your heart failure is doing.

Be sure to check your benefit plan for specific coverage details.

Working well with your doctor

Consider these tips to make the most of your doctor visit. Together, you can help manage your heart failure.

1 Bring a list of everything you take:

- Prescription medicines
- Over-the-counter medicines
- Supplements or herbs
- Vitamins

2 Bring your heart failure Health Log. Talk about any changes that might be needed. Make sure your treatment plan is right for you.

3 Bring a list of all your questions for the doctor. Not sure what to ask? Look at the list on the last page of this booklet. It will help you get started.

4 Be sure your doctor:

- Helps you take steps to stay healthy
- Has a plan to treat your heart failure
- Makes time for your questions
- Listens to you

When you have heart failure: weigh yourself every day

Wake up. Check your weight right away. Don't miss one day! When you have heart failure, the scale can tell you how you're doing. If you gain weight suddenly that can be a sign that your symptoms may soon be getting worse.

Weigh yourself every day! That's the best way to know if you have extra fluid. Ask your doctor what amount of weight gain means that you should call him or her. Usually, people should call their doctors if they gain two or more pounds overnight. Or, they call if they gain five or more pounds in one week. But, your doctor will tell you what's right for your situation.

Read these tips about weighing yourself:

- Use the same scale each day.
- Write down your weight as soon as you get off the scale.
- Weigh yourself each morning after you use the toilet.

Is your heart failure getting worse?

Everything is going well. You feel like you're managing your heart failure. But, suddenly, your symptoms get worse. This would make anyone worry. But acting quickly can make a difference. You may be less likely to go to the hospital. You also can feel better and live longer.

That's why it's important to notice changes such as:

- Shortness of breath, especially when you're active or lying down
- Tiredness or weakness
- Swelling (edema) in the feet, ankles, legs, fingers or abdomen
- Sudden, unexplained weight gain
- Clothes are suddenly tighter

Do you have any of these symptoms? If so, ask yourself these questions. Then, talk with your doctor.

- Do I need more pillows to sleep at night?
- Do I have a cough that doesn't go away?
- Did I miss any of my medicines?
- Did I eat food with a lot of salt or sodium?
- Have I been weighing myself every day? Or, did I miss a few days in a row?
- Have I been sick? Or, is anything different going on?



Eat smart — limit salt

Too much salt can make heart failure worse. Salt, or sodium, causes water to build up in the body. The extra water makes your heart work harder to pump the blood. It can also cause shortness of breath and swelling. That's why it's important to limit your salt, or sodium.

These tips can help:

- Ask your doctor how much salt or sodium you can safely eat each day.
- Do you have a salt shaker at your table? Put it away.
- Use other spices to flavor your food.
- Eat fresh or frozen vegetables. Canned foods have a lot of sodium.
- Snack on low-salt foods. Most chips have a lot of salt.
- Read food labels. They show how much salt or sodium is in the food.
- When eating out:
 - Ask that your food be cooked without salt or MSG. MSG is a type of sodium.
 - Ask for dressings or sauces “on the side.” Then you can control how much you eat.

