



Queensway Carleton
Hospital

Congestive Heart Failure (CHF)

Patient Information Booklet

Information is available in alternate formats upon request

Your Health Care - Be Involved

- **Be involved in your health care. Speak up if you have questions or concerns about your care.**
- **Tell a member of your health care team about your past illnesses and your current health condition.**
- **Bring all of your medicines with you when you go to the hospital or to a medical appointment.**
- **Tell a member of your care team if you have ever had an allergic or bad reaction to any medicine or food.**
- **Make sure you know what to do when you go home from the hospital or from your medical appointment.**

Patient safety is very important to the Queensway Carleton Hospital and this information is provided to patients/families to help inform you of your essential role in your own safety.

The information contained in this booklet is not specific medical advice, nor a substitute for medical advice. For your safety, it is advised that you speak with your doctor and healthcare team about your particular health care needs.

Protect Yourself! Clean your hands frequently and ask your health care providers and visitors to do the same. Clean Hands Saves Lives.

Heart Failure Patient Information Booklet (for inpatient use)

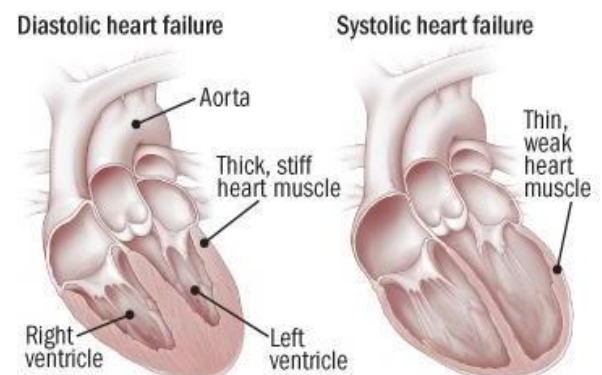
You have had a recent visit to our hospital with symptoms of congestion or extra fluid in your body. You may have been feeling more breathless, swollen and tired and needed to visit the hospital for treatment. Heart failure is a chronic disease that affects many people worldwide. Learning about this problem and working with your health care team will help you to manage your symptoms and improve your heart function. This information booklet is meant to provide information about heart failure. For more details please visit our website at www.qch.on.ca for the Heart Function Clinic or call the Heart Function Clinic Nurse at 613-721-2000 ext. 2961.

What is Heart Failure?

Heart Failure (or congestive heart failure - **CHF**) can happen to a person with a heart muscle problem. This problem can sometimes cause the heart to be unable to deal with the amount of blood the body expects it to pump. This makes the blood congest or “back-up” making people feel very tired and lightheaded. Often they develop swelling in their ankles, legs or stomach. Sometimes they can’t sleep or do their usual activities comfortably because they feel short of breath.

There are two types of heart muscle problems causing CHF

- ♥ **The heart muscle is stiff** and has trouble relaxing to fill with blood (diastolic heart failure or heart failure with preserved ejection fraction HFpEF)
- ♥ **The heart muscle is weak** and the heart is big and baggy (systolic heart failure or heart failure with reduced ejection fraction HFrEF)



You and your doctors may know from past tests if you have a stiff or weak heart. If not, an ultrasound test of your chest called an echocardiogram may be done. This test checks the heart to see if there is any problem with how it is pumping.

What causes problems with the heart muscle?

There are many conditions that can strain and damage your heart muscle. Some are sudden and others happen over time. Heart damage can be caused by fast heart rhythms, past heart attacks, high blood pressure, heart valve problems, alcohol abuse, infection from a virus or bacteria, or unknown reasons.

Signs & Symptoms

People with heart failure are at risk for hospitalizations because of fluid buildup. If blood is not pumped around your body well, it can back up causing fluid to collect in your lungs, stomach or legs. You may feel more easily breathless, more swollen or bloated, more tired or weaker than normal. The doctor will help you get rid of this extra fluid by giving you water pills called diuretics, usually furosemide (LasixTM). These pills make you pass more urine to get rid of the extra fluid so your heart can feel better and help your symptoms go away.

Not everyone has the same symptoms. It is important to know your own signs/symptoms. Think back to how you felt just before coming to the hospital.

Did you have?

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| ♥ Rapid weight gain | ♥ Cough with white frothy sputum | ♥ Difficulty with lying down (need to be upright in bed or in a chair to sleep) |
| ♥ Shortness of breath | ♥ Nausea, loss of appetite | |
| ♥ Fatigue, tiredness | ♥ Confusion or foggy brain, dizziness or lightheadedness | |
| ♥ Stomach bloating, swelling of legs, feet, hands | | |

Research shows that a combination of “self-care behaviors” and medications help people with heart failure feel better, stay out of hospital, and live longer.

What are “Self-Care Behaviors”?

Self-care behaviors are actions you can take day-to-day to look after your heart and watch for problems.

- **Weigh yourself** every day, in the morning, after going to the bathroom.
- **Limit your salt** intake.
- **Be active** (eg. walk) every day.
- **Quit** smoking/drinking too much alcohol.
- **Recognize signs of trouble.** Know the signs and symptoms of heart failure (page 9) and when to call your doctor or go to the Emergency Room (page 5).

Daily weight

From now on, you will need to watch for signs of having too much fluid in your body. The best way to do this is to weigh yourself first thing every morning after going to the bathroom but before eating or dressing. This is called a dry weight.

- Write your dry weight down every day and look at what is happening over time along with the quality of your breathing, and amount of swelling in your legs and stomach. Use a calendar or a chart like the one on page 8. Normally, weight will go up and down by a pound or two. Be on the lookout for trends. Is it going up or down and how quickly?
- If your weight goes up or down quickly (**a gain or loss of 3 pounds overnight or 5 pounds in 5 to 7 days for instance**) you may need a water pill (called a diuretic, usually Furosemide or LasixTM) medication added or the dose adjusted if you are already taking it.

Sudden weight gain:

- If the doctor has prescribed Furosemide (LasixTM) for you to take when experiencing sudden weight gain, do as instructed until the extra weight and your symptoms go away. Contact your doctor or nurse if you are not sure.
- If you were not instructed by your doctor to take Furosemide (Lasix) for a sudden weight gain, call your family doctor right away for help.

Sudden weight loss:

- If your weight has suddenly gone down and you do not feel well, call your doctor or nurse right away.

Salt

One of the biggest reasons why fluid starts to build up is because of too much salt in food. Pre-packaged or restaurant foods are loaded with salt (sodium).

Always read the nutrition label on everything you buy. In fact, go through your cupboards and fridge at home and take a look at how much sodium is in your food. You will be surprised at the amount of salt in some of them! Look for food with 200mg or less sodium per serving or 5% or less of total daily value on the label. Aim for no more than 1500mg a day of added sodium (don't count natural sodium amounts in fresh foods). When you are shopping for groceries next time you can compare brand-to-brand and pick the brand with the lowest amount.

Activity

If exercise came in a pill, everyone would be on it! It benefits your heart, body, and mind. Keeping active is a very important part of your treatment for heart failure. Aim for 30 minutes total of activity (like walking) every day. Start slow, and build up to this. Stop if you have chest pain, shortness of breath, nausea or dizziness. If you would like to join a structured program, call the University of Ottawa Heart Institute's Cardiac Rehabilitation Center for more information. Their number is **613-696-7068**.

Smoking and too much alcohol

If you smoke, QUIT! Smoking reduces the oxygen in your blood, and makes your heart beat too fast. It also causes inflammation in your blood vessels making them harden and become smaller. Your heart muscle needs to get a good blood supply to work well. Smoking can starve the heart of the oxygen and nutrients it needs to work properly. If you are a smoker, ask your health care provider for information and tools to help you quit. Call the University of Ottawa Heart Institute's Quit Smoking Program for help at **613-696-7069**.

Drinking large amounts of alcohol is toxic to the heart and can cause or worsen heart failure. Talk to your doctor about your intake. Generally, the accepted amount is 2 drinks a week. More drinks means more risk. For more information and help with this or other addictions, please contact OAARS at **613-241-5202**



Recognizing signs of trouble

Contact your health care provider if you have a sudden or unexpected

- weight gain as fast as three pounds in 1 day or five pounds in 5 to 7 days
- worsening swelling in the feet, legs or bloated abdomen
- worsened breathing
- inability to do your usual activities
- cough with whitish frothy sputum
- unexpected weight loss as fast as three pounds in 1 day or five pounds in 5 to 7 days
- dizziness or lightheadedness

CALL 911 for:

- **sudden unrelieved or frequent chest pain, chest pressures or tightness**
- **extreme shortness of breath at rest**
- **passing out or feeling like you're going to pass out**

Medications for Heart Failure

Medications, along with the “self-care behaviors” listed above, are an important part of your treatment. If your heart is weak, they are used to help rest the heart and try to reverse some of the damage to the muscle. There are certain types of medications that are commonly used.

These are:

- **ACE inhibitors (ACEI) OR angiotensin receptor blockers (ARBs) OR angiotensin receptor-neprilysin inhibitor (ARNIs)**
- **Beta-blockers**
- **Mineralocorticoid receptor antagonists (MRAs)**
- **Sodium-glucose co-transporter 2 inhibitors (SGLT2s)**
- **Diuretics** or “water pills” that remove excess fluid from the body

Not all of the medications listed above are used for every person. The medications and dosage chosen vary for each person. It is common to have medication and dosage changes during treatment to obtain the best results for each person. Many of the heart failure medications lower your blood pressure to protect your heart. Make sure to change positions slowly and wait for a few seconds before walking after you stand up. See the chart on page 10 and 11 for more information about medications. **Contact your provider if you have a concern with your heart medication.**

Potassium

Medications for heart failure can increase or decrease your potassium level. A low potassium level can cause extreme tiredness and weakness. A high potassium can cause your heart to beat irregularly. Your doctor will monitor your potassium level and you may be instructed to eat or avoid food that contains potassium and/or take a potassium supplement.

Potassium-rich foods include:

- Fresh fruits (oranges, bananas, and melons)
- Coconut water
- Fruit juices (most juices, orange, pineapple and grapefruit).
Avoid tomato juice because it contains too much salt
- Dried fruits (apricots, dates, prunes and raisins)
- Vegetables (potatoes, spinach, and sweet potatoes)
- Beans
- Meat, fish, poultry

Medications to avoid

Do not use non-steroidal anti-inflammatory (NSAID's) medications like:

- **Ibuprophen (Advil™)**
- **Aleve™**
- **Motrin™**
- **Voltaren™ cream**

These can make your heart failure worse. Products using **acetaminophen (Tylenol™)** should be used instead. Please talk to your pharmacist or doctor if you have regular pain.

You should advise your physician if you are currently pregnant or plan to become pregnant since some medicines may be harmful to an unborn child.

Tips on taking your medications

- Learn about the medications you are taking (name, amount, what they look like and what they do).
- Bring all your medication bottles and boxes to your doctor appointments.
- Follow the directions for your prescription carefully. Medications will only work if you use them correctly.
- Take your medication regularly, even if you feel well or your heart is “better”.
- Take your medications at the same time or times every day. Discuss dose times with your physician. Sometimes spacing the dose of heart medications throughout the day can help reduce side-effects.
- Try not to miss taking your medication. If you miss a dose, take the missed dose as soon as you remember. If it is almost time for your next dose, skip the missed dose and go back to your regular dosing schedule. **Do not take a double dose.** Talk to your pharmacist for help organizing doses and delivering your medications if you have concerns.
- Ask your doctor or pharmacist before taking any medications or herbal products that you can buy without a prescription. Let your heart failure doctor know if a new drug is added by another doctor.
- Medications have many different actions and side effects. Call your doctor, nurse or pharmacist if you have questions, or if you notice side effects.
- Make sure that you have enough medication to last until your next prescription refill or visit to your doctor. When you are ordering refills, call your pharmacy a few days before you run out.

WEIGHT RECORD SHEET FOR _____(months)

Target (baseline) weight _____(Your weight with no heart failure symptoms)

- ♥ Weigh yourself first thing each morning after going to the bathroom and record the number. Look at the trend. Is it staying steady? You may need to take an extra water pill if your weight starts to go up quickly (more than 2-3lbs in a day or 5lbs in a week) and/or you are getting signs of fluid buildup (difficulty breathing, cough, swelling of feet, legs ankles or stomach). Call the Heart Function Clinic at 613-721-2000 ext. 2961 for help.
- ♥ If you are having severe breathing problems (no relief even with resting), please go directly to the nearest emergency department.
- ♥ Avoid high salt foods like restaurant food and processed food.
- ♥ Be active every day. Move often and for as long as you can.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday



Self-Check Plan for HF Management



Excellent – Keep Up the Good



☐ No new or worsening shortness of breath



☐ Physical activity level is normal for you



☐ No new swelling, feet and legs look normal for you



☐ Weight check stable
Weight: _____



☐ No sign of chest pain

**GREAT!
CONTINUE:**



Daily
Weight
Check



Meds as
Directed



Low
Sodium
Eating



Follow-up
Visits

Pay Attention – Use Caution!



☐ Dry, hacking cough



☐ Worsening shortness of breath with activity



☐ Increased swelling of legs, feet, and ankles



☐ Sudden weight gain of more than 2-3 lbs in a 24 hour period (or 5 lbs in a week)



☐ Discomfort or swelling in the abdomen



☐ Trouble Sleeping

CHECK IN!

Your symptoms may indicate:



A need to contact your doctor or provider



A need for a change in medications

Medical Alert –



☐ Frequent dry, hacking cough



☐ Shortness of breath at rest



☐ Increased discomfort or swelling in the lower body



☐ Sudden weight gain of more than 2-3 lbs in a 24 hour period (or 5 lbs in a week)



☐ New or worsening dizziness, confusion, sadness or depression



☐ Loss of appetite



☐ Increased trouble sleeping; cannot lie flat

WARNING! You need to be evaluated right away.



Call your physician or call **911**

Medications For My Heart Function						
Types of Medicine	ONE of each of these				For some people	
	ARNI/ACEI/ARB	Beta Blocker	MRA	SGLT2 Inhibitor	Sinus Node Inhibitor	Diuretic (water pill)
Common Names	ARNI Sacubitril + Valsartan (Entresto®)	Bisoprolol Carvedilol Metoprolol	Spironolactone Eplerenone	Empagliflozin (Jardiance®) Dapagliflozin (Forxiga®)	Ivabridine (Lancora®)	Furosemide (Lasix®) Metolazone
	ACEI Ramipril, Enalapril, Perindopril					
	ARB Candesartan, Valsartan					
How It Works	Helps the heart to work better and stops heart function from getting worse					Removes Fluid
	Opens up blood vessels to make it easier for your heart to pump blood to your body.	Blocks adrenaline and slows your heart rate so your heart does not have to work as hard.	Blocks stress hormones that make the heart stiff and can causes scarring.	Works in many ways to help lower stress on your heart	Slows your heart rate, so your heart can relax and fill up more easily	Gets rid of extra fluid and lowers swelling by making you pass more urine (pee more).
	How does the medication help you?					
Feel Better	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Live Longer	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Fewer Hospital Visits	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

What do you need to watch out for?						
	ARNI/ACEI/ARB	Beta Blocker	MRA	SGLT2 Inhibitor	Sinus Node Inhibitor	Diuretic (water pill)
Kidney Function (Blood Work)	✓		✓	✓		✓
Potassium (Blood Work)	✓ Risk of HIGH potassium		✓ Risk of HIGH potassium			✓ Risk of LOW potassium
Symptoms of Low Blood Pressure	✓	✓				
Symptoms of Low Heart Rate		✓			✓	
Other Side Effects	ACEI: May cause a dry cough. Reversible when the medication is stopped Swelling of the tongue, lips and throat (very rare). Stop the medicine and get help right away	May feel tired or low energy when you first start this medication This will get better as your body gets used to the medication	Spironolactone: May cause breasts to get larger and/or tender, especially in males	May cause genital yeast infections To help stop this from happening use a wet cloth, wet wipe or wet toilet paper when you use the bathroom Also, make sure to keep the area clean	Vision changes such as halos around bright lights that go away over time	Dehydration (thirsty, dry mouth) Sun sensitivity (wear sunscreen) Gout
Tip For Taking Each Medication		DO NOT stop this medication suddenly unless your healthcare provider tells you to. Your heart may race if you stop suddenly		This medication is also used to treat diabetes	Take with food	Take earlier in the day, before 2 pm. This lowers your chance of having to get up overnight to pee
General Tips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low blood pressure may make you feel lightheaded, faint or nearly faint- especially when you stand up suddenly. • Low heat rate may make you feel tired, lightheaded, faint or nearly fainting. • If you are vomiting, may have diarrhea, or are dehydrated you may need to stop taking some of the above medication for a short time. See "Sick Day Management Sheet". • Talk to your healthcare provider about your medicines when you have any questions or concerns. 					

Reference: [Heart Failure Medicines Handout 2022 Alberta Health Services](#).

Mission, Vision & Values

OUR VISION

Trusted as one of Canada's most caring and innovative health partners, fostering vibrant, healthy communities

OUR MISSION

To provide high-quality, compassionate and coordinated care for the people and communities we serve.

OUR VALUES

- Collaboration
- Accountability
- Innovation
- Respect

Our Cornerstone Programs are:

- Acute Rehabilitation
- Childbirth
- Critical Care
- Emergency
- Geriatric
- Medicine
- Mental Health
- Surgical

