

Introduction to *Living Well With Heart Failure*

This binder will help you follow the discharge instructions that you received during your hospital stay. Your discharge instructions are outlined below.

CONGESTIVE HEART FAILURE DISCHARGE INSTRUCTIONS

When your condition worsens or does not seem to be responding to treatment, taking action right away may prevent more serious illness or an emergency trip to the hospital.

CALL YOUR PHYSICIAN IF:

- You gain 3 pounds in a day or 5 pounds in a week.
- You feel tired all the time or have decreased ability to do normal activities.
- You experience increased difficulty in breathing at rest, with activity, when lying down or you need more pillows to breathe easier.
- You have a dry hacking cough that does not go away.
- You have increased swelling in your feet or legs.
- You have swelling or discomfort in the abdomen.
- You are dizzy when you stand up.

MEDICATIONS—TAKE YOUR MEDICATIONS AS PRESCRIBED.

- Do not stop taking or make any changes in your medications without consulting your doctor.
- Always keep a list of your current medications with you in your wallet.
- Maintain at least one week's supply of medication at all times.
- Call your doctor's office at least 48 hours in advance when you need refills.
- Store your medications in a cool, dry place.

DISCHARGE INSTRUCTIONS CONTINUED:

FOLLOW UP—ALWAYS KEEP YOUR DOCTOR'S APPOINTMENTS AFTER YOU ARE DISCHARGED.

- Call your doctor's office if you have any questions or concerns about your treatment once you are discharged.
- You should see your doctor 1-2 weeks after you are discharged. If you don't have an appointment scheduled with your doctor when you leave the hospital, you need to call and make an appointment for follow up.

WEIGHT MONITORING—TO MONITOR HEART FAILURE AND FLUID RETENTION:

- Weigh yourself EVERY morning at the same time after you urinate. Do not wear shoes or slippers.
- Keep a record of your daily weight.



DIET—AVOID FOODS THAT ARE HIGH IN SODIUM (SALT).

- Examples are regular canned soups, potato chips, saltines, bacon and most frozen meals and entrees.
- Do not use salt in food preparation or with your meals.
- Check food labels for sodium (salt) content. Use products marked "low salt" or "no salt".
- When dining out ask that your order be prepared without salt.
- Do not use salt substitutes. You may use "Mrs. Dash" or "Papa Dash" seasoning.
- Limit excessive fluid intake. Your doctor will inform you if there is a limit to how much you can drink each day.
- Ask your doctor if you may have alcohol.

N **NO SMOKING:** Resources are listed in the last chapter or contact your Primary Care Physician.

ACTIVITY:

- Resume normal daily activities as tolerated.
- Check with your doctor about an exercise program or enrolling in Cardiac Conditioning classes.
- Pace yourself. Give yourself enough time to get things done.
- Avoid activity after meals or when the weather is very hot.

**FOLLOW THIS CHART TO ASSESS HOW YOU ARE DOING AND
WHEN TO CALL THE DOCTOR**

GREEN ZONE: ALL CLEAR	<i>Green Zone Means:</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No shortness of breath • No swelling • No weight gain • No decrease in your activity level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your symptoms are under control • Keep taking your medications as directed by your doctor • Weigh yourself daily • Eat foods that are low in salt • Keep all your medical appointments
YELLOW ZONE: CAUTION	<i>Yellow Zone Means:</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weight gain of 3 or more pounds in a day • Coughing • More swelling • More shortness of breath when active • Sleeping on more pillows • Anything else unusual that bothers you 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your medications may need to be adjusted • Call your health care professional
RED ZONE: DANGER	<i>Red Zone Means:</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shortness of breath all the time, even at rest • Chest pain that doesn't go away • Wheezing or chest tightness at rest • Weight gain or loss of more than 5 pounds in less than one week • Confusion • Not able to perform normal activities like showering, cooking or dressing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call your physician right away (be sure to tell the office staff that you are having any of these symptoms)