

# What to expect during your hospital stay when you have heart failure

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This guide will help you and your caregivers know what to expect while you are in the hospital. You will probably be in the hospital for 5 days. Your stay may be shorter or longer depending on your needs.

If you or your caregivers have questions or concerns, please speak with any member of your health care team.

## What is heart failure?

Heart failure is a condition in which your heart is not able to pump enough blood and oxygen to all parts of your body. It does not mean that your heart has stopped working but that your heart muscle has weakened and needs to work harder to keep blood flowing through your body.

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## Day 1 and 2 – when your needs are greatest

<b>Tests</b>	<p>You may have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• blood tests</li> <li>• ECG</li> <li>• chest x-ray</li> <li>• ultrasound of your heart, called an echocardiogram.</li> </ul>
<b>General Care</b>	<p>You will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• be weighed before breakfast each day</li> <li>• have your blood pressure, heart, breathing and temperature checked often – these are called your vital signs</li> </ul> <p>Doctors, nurses, and other members of your health care team will see you daily.</p> <p>You may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• need to wear a heart monitor</li> <li>• need oxygen</li> <li>• have an intravenous, called an IV</li> <li>• need help with activities such as bathing</li> </ul> <p><b>Tell us right away if you have:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• pain, discomfort, tightness or pressure in your chest</li> <li>• an increase in the shortness of your breath</li> <li>• dizziness that is making you feel unwell</li> <li>• palpitations or feelings of a fluttering in your chest</li> </ul>
<b>Medications</b>	<p>You will take medications to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• cause you to pass more urine – this helps you get rid of the build up of fluid or swelling</li> <li>• help your heart to pump better and lungs to breath easier</li> </ul> <p>You may see the pharmacist if needed.</p>

## Day 1 and 2 – when your needs are greatest

<b>Eating and Drinking</b>	<p>You will be on a “No Added Salt” diet. If you have other special dietary needs, they will be discussed with you.</p> <p>Limit your fluids to 6 to 8 cups a day unless you are told something else.</p> <p>You may see the dietitian if needed.</p>
<b>Activity</b>	<p>Rest, but try to get up and sit in a chair for meals, and walk to the bathroom.</p> <p>You may see the physiotherapist or occupational therapist if needed.</p>
<b>Information About Your Heart</b>	<p>You will be given “<b>Managing Congestive Heart Failure</b>”, a book by the Heart and Stroke Foundation. Also see the insert in this handout called “<b>Patient Reminders</b>”.</p> <p>These resources give you information about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• how your heart works</li><li>• what your symptoms mean</li><li>• what changes in your symptoms to report to your nurse and doctor</li></ul> <p>Talk to any member of your health care team if you have questions.</p>
<b>Planning to Leave the Hospital</b>	<p>Planning for the day you leave the hospital, called your discharge, begins early in your hospital stay.</p> <p>If you or your caregiver have questions or concerns about your discharge, please speak with any member of your health care team.</p> <p>You may see the social worker if needed.</p>

## Day 3 and 4 – when you are stable

<b>Tests</b>	<p>You may have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• blood tests</li> <li>• ECG</li> </ul>
<b>General Care</b>	<p>Write down your weight before breakfast each day in the “<b>Weight Diary</b>” included in this handout.</p> <p>Your vital signs will be checked, but less often.</p> <p>Doctors, nurses, and other members of your health care team will see you daily.</p> <p>If you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• are wearing a heart monitor, it may be stopped</li> <li>• have an intravenous (IV), it may be stopped</li> <li>• are using oxygen, it may be used less often or stopped</li> </ul> <p>Increase your activities such as bathing. You will get as much help as you need.</p> <p><b>Tell us right away if you have:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• pain, discomfort, tightness or pressure in your chest</li> <li>• an increase in the shortness of your breath</li> <li>• dizziness that is making you feel unwell</li> <li>• palpitations or feelings of a fluttering in your chest</li> </ul>
<b>Medications</b>	<p>Your doctor may change your medications based on your needs.</p> <p>Often people with heart failure need many types of medications.</p> <p>You may see the pharmacist if needed.</p>

## Day 3 and 4 – when you are stable

<b>Eating and Drinking</b>	<p>If you have questions about the “No Added Salt” diet or how much fluid you can drink in a day, ask the health care team.</p> <p>You may see the dietitian if needed.</p>
<b>Activity</b>	<p>Walk in your room:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• walk at a slow pace that does not leave you more breathless than what is normal for you</li><li>• gradually increase the distance to the hallways for short walks</li></ul> <p>Increase other activities such as bathing on your own to help you get ready to leave the hospital. Take rest periods as often as you need.</p> <p>You may see the physiotherapist or occupational therapist if needed.</p>
<b>Information About Your Heart</b>	<p>Review “<b>Managing Congestive Heart Failure</b>”, a book by the Heart and Stroke Foundation that is given to you, and the insert in this handout “<b>Patient Reminders</b>”.</p> <p>These resources give you information about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• how your heart works</li><li>• what your symptoms mean</li><li>• what changes in your symptoms to report</li></ul> <p>Talk to any member of your health care team if you have questions.</p>
<b>Planning to Leave the Hospital</b>	<p>Before you leave the hospital, we will arrange follow-up appointments with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• your family doctor</li><li>• the Heart Function Clinic, and</li><li>• the Community Care Access Centre (CCAC)</li></ul> <p>Talk to any member of your health care team if you have any questions or concerns.</p>

## Day 5 – when it is time to leave the hospital (discharge)

<b>Tests</b>	<p>You may have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• blood tests</li> <li>• if you need other tests when you leave the hospital, they will be booked for you</li> </ul>
<b>General Care</b>	<p>When you go home:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weigh yourself each day. The best time to weigh yourself is in the morning some time after you go to the bathroom and before you eat breakfast.</li> <li>• Keep track of your symptoms so you can see if they are getting worse or if you get new ones. See the insert in this handout “<b>Patient Reminders</b>” for a list of the symptoms of heart failure.</li> <li>• Write your weight and your symptoms each day in the “<b>Weight Diary</b>” included in this handout. Bring this diary to all of your health care appointments.</li> <li>• Quit smoking if you smoke. Talk to your doctor if you need help.</li> <li>• Get a flu shot every year.</li> </ul>
<b>Medications</b>	<p>Have your prescriptions and “<b>Discharge Summary</b>” with you before you leave.</p> <p>Take all of your medications, your “<b>Discharge Summary</b>”, and your new prescriptions with you to the pharmacy right away.</p>
<b>Eating and Drinking</b>	<p>Avoid foods and drinks high in salt, such as canned foods, salty foods and processed meats. Do not add extra salt to your food.</p> <p>Do not drink alcohol.</p> <p>Limit your fluid intake to 6 to 8 cups a day unless you are told something else.</p>

## Day 5 – when it is time to leave the hospital (discharge)

<b>Activity</b>	<p>Walk on level surfaces and avoid hills.</p> <p>Walk indoors when it is too hot, humid or cold outside.</p> <p>If you feel unusually tired or ill, limit your activity. For more information, ask for a copy of “Save Your Energy”.</p> <p>Ask your health care team about an exercise program that is right for you.</p>
<b>Information About Your Heart</b>	<p>Take the “<b>Managing Congestive Heart Failure</b>” booklet home with you. Refer to it as a guide. Let members of your family and friends read it too. Also, see the insert “<b>Patient Reminders</b>” in this handout for a list of reminders and resources.</p> <p>Bring the “<b>Discharge Summary</b>” and your medications to all of your doctor’s appointments including visits to the Heart Function Clinic.</p>
<b>Planning to Leave the Hospital</b>	<p>When you leave the hospital, you will have appointments with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• your family doctor</li><li>• the Heart Function Clinic, and</li><li>• the Community Care Access Centre (CCAC)</li></ul> <p>Carry a current list of medications with you at all times. Show this list to the pharmacist before buying any herbal or over-the-counter medications.</p>





# Patient Reminders

Symptoms your heart failure may be getting worse	Call your doctor right away	Call 911
<p>You are the expert on how you feel. Take time each day to notice whether your heart failure is getting worse. Noticing changes early and reporting them to your doctor can prevent urgent problems.</p> <p>Keep track of these symptoms every day and <b>call your doctor if they get worse:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a weight gain or loss of:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ 2 pounds or 1 kilogram a day</li> <li><b>or</b></li> <li>▶ 5 pounds or 2 to 3 kilograms a week</li> </ul> </li> <li>• more swelling in your feet, legs or stomach</li> <li>• loss of appetite, bloating or fullness in your stomach, nausea or vomiting</li> <li>• increased shortness of breath with your usual activities</li> <li>• feeling more tired or weak</li> <li>• a constant cough or chest congestion</li> <li>• feeling dizzy, light-headed or sweating</li> <li>• feeling confused or restless</li> </ul>	<p>Call your doctor right away if you have any of these:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• increased shortness of breath or a new shortness of breath while resting</li> <li>• trouble sleeping because of difficulty breathing – for example, if it wakes you up at night</li> <li>• need to sleep sitting up on more pillows than usual</li> <li>• fast or irregular heart beats or a “racing heart” that makes you feel dizzy</li> <li>• coughing up frothy or pink sputum</li> <li>• feeling like you may faint</li> </ul>	<p>Call 911 or your local emergency number right away if you have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• severe shortness of breath that will not go away</li> <li>• fainted</li> <li>• chest discomfort or pain that lasts more than 15 minutes and is not relieved by rest or nitroglycerin</li> </ul> <p><b>What to do if you have chest discomfort or pain:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Rest - Stop what you are doing right away. Sit or lie down.</li> <li>2. Relax - Take slow, deep breaths.</li> <li>3. Take nitroglycerin - Take your 1st dose of nitroglycerin. Spray or place tablet under your tongue.           <p>If the chest pain does not go away after 5 minutes, take a 2nd dose.</p> <p>If the chest pain is still there after 5 more minutes (now a total of 10 minutes), take a 3rd dose.</p> </li> <li>4. If the chest pain is still there after 5 more minutes (now a total of 15 minutes) call 911.</li> </ol>

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# Community Resources

<b>Hamilton Community Care Access Centre</b>	905-523-8600 or 1-800-450-8002 website: <a href="http://www.hamilton.ccac-ont.ca">www.hamilton.ccac-ont.ca</a>
<b>Heart &amp; Stroke Foundation of Ontario</b>	1439 Upper Ottawa Street Hamilton, Ontario L8W 3J6  905-574-4105 1-866-797-0000 or 1-866-797-0007 website: <a href="http://www.heartandstroke.ca">www.heartandstroke.ca</a>
<b>Telehealth Ontario</b>	Free. Talk to a Registered Nurse over the telephone, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.  Hamilton office: 905-574-4105
<b>Your family doctor</b>	Dr. _____ Phone: _____
<b>Your pharmacist</b>	Phone: _____





