Heart Failure is also known as “Congestive Heart Failure.”

The heart is a pump that moves blood around your body and lungs. Your blood carries oxygen and nutrients. Having heart failure does not mean your heart has stopped beating. It means your heart is not pumping blood as it should. Sometimes the heart cannot supply enough blood to keep your body working properly.

When blood backs up, some fluid gets forced into the lungs, ankles/feet, or abdomen, or all of these areas.

Causes of Heart Failure

- Clogged blood vessels in your heart (coronary heart disease)
- Past heart attack
- High blood pressure
- Heart valve problems
- Lung diseases
- Genetic diseases
- Heart muscle disease
- Virus
- Alcohol or drug abuse
- Chemotherapy
- Medical problems during pregnancy
- Obesity
- Unknown causes

Things that may happen when your heart is not working properly:

- Heart chambers and muscles grow larger.
- Heart beats faster to try to pump the same amount of blood to the rest of the body.
- Over time, even with these changes, the heart still cannot pump enough blood. This results in:
  - Less blood to the stomach and intestines, leading to a bloated feeling and less of an appetite.
  - Less blood to the brain, making you feel dizzy and more tired. In some older people this may even cause confusion.
  - Less blood to the kidneys, making them less able to work effectively.
Warning Signs of Heart Failure

- Unusual dizziness, lightheadedness, or feeling faint
- A sensation of rapid or irregular heartbeat
- Difficulty breathing or waking up at night short of breath
- Reduced appetite or feeling bloated
- Increased fatigue or tiredness
- Swelling on the ankles and/or feet

If you develop any of these symptoms, please call your physician.

3 LBS or more weight gain in one day
5 LBS or more weight gain over a week
### GREEN ZONE

This zone is your goal! Your symptoms are under control. You have:

- No increase in shortness of breath.
- No weight gain of more than 3 pounds in a day or 5 pounds in a week.
- No swelling of your feet, ankles, legs, or stomach.
- No chest pain.

### YELLOW ZONE

Call your doctor ____________________________ at ____________________________ if:

- You have a weight gain of 3 pounds or more in 1 day or 5 pounds or more in 1 week.
- You are more short of breath than usual.
- You have increased swelling of your feet, ankles, legs, or stomach.
- You are feeling more tired or have less energy.
- You have a dry, hacky cough.
- You feel uneasy; you know something isn’t right.
- It’s harder for you to breathe when lying down, or you need to sleep sitting up in a chair.

### RED ZONE

Emergency! Go to the Emergency Department or call 911 if:

- You are struggling to breathe or have unrelieved shortness of breath while sitting still.
- You have chest pain.
- You are confused or having trouble thinking clearly.
- You feel a new, or a change in, irregular or fast heart beat.
- You are feeling lightheaded.
- You have passed out.

### Every Day Checklist

- Weigh yourself in the morning after you urinate, before you eat or drink anything. Use the same scale and wear the same amount of clothing. Write down your weight and compare it to the previous day.
- Check for swelling in your feet, ankles, legs, and stomach.
- Eat low-salt food.
- Balance activity and rest periods.
- Take your medicine as directed by your doctor.
Low Salt/Sodium Diet

- It's important to limit your sodium intake to no more than 2000 mg per day, unless your doctor tells you a different amount.
- Too much sodium makes your body retain water, which can make symptoms of heart failure worse.
- Read food labels for sodium content.
- You may want to limit the sodium content of meals to no more than 600 mg.
- Before using a salt substitute, talk to your doctor about which ones are safe.
- Sea salt and kosher salt are the same as table (normal) salt.

Tips for a Low Sodium Diet

- The key word to less sodium is FRESH! FRESH! FRESH!
- Get rid of the salt shaker and don’t add salt when cooking. Just ¼ teaspoon of table salt or sea salt has almost 600 mg of sodium!
- Avoid canned and processed foods.
- Avoid TV dinners with more than 600 mg of sodium in each serving.
- Limit or avoid restaurants; for long trips, pack a cooler with fruits and vegetables.
- Foods made from scratch are best.
- Use herbs and spices to flavor food rather than salt.
- Look for foods labeled “no added salt.”
- Cut out the salt used in cooking, such as water for pastas, rice, and hot cereals.
- In place of salt use onions, garlic, peppers, dry mustard, lemon juice, wine, or malt or balsamic vinegars.
- Use fresh or unsalted frozen vegetables. If you must use canned vegetables, choose unsalted.

For additional information on heart failure, visit the websites of the American Association of Heart Failure Nurses, aahfn.org, or the American Heart Association, heart.org.