



**INSIDE:**  
Your heart  
action plan



# Lifestyles for Heart Failure

## Stay active with heart failure

When you first hear the term “heart failure,” it can be confusing. It sounds as if your heart isn’t working at all and nothing can be done. Fortunately, that’s not the case. Heart failure simply means that your heart isn’t pumping as well as it should. You likely feel winded, tired or uncomfortable when you move around a lot. This can turn you off to exercise, too.

But staying as active as possible not only makes life more rewarding, it also improves your overall health — and makes you feel good about yourself.

### Your personal exercise plan

First, ask your health care team for guidance on the type and amount of exercise that’s right for you. And, don’t try to do too

much at first. Start out slowly and build up gradually to your exercise goals.

For some people with heart failure, a good place to start is to aim for at least two and a half hours of moderate exercise a week. You can achieve this by aiming for at least 30 minutes of physical activity on most days of the week. And it’s OK to break up exercise into 10-minute sessions a few times a day.

### And be creative about how you add activity to your day. Try:

- > Playing actively with your children or grandchildren
- > Doing some chores around the house, such as vacuuming, mopping or cleaning the windows
- > Walking around the mall or



### CARE FOR YOUR HEALTH®

Living with heart failure isn’t always easy. But *Care For Your Health* — an online coaching program — can help you learn ways to manage your health.

To get started:

- > Visit your plan’s website.
- > Log in as a member.
- > Click on the *Health & Wellness* tab.
- > Click *BlueHealthConnection*®.
- > Click *My Digital Health Coaching* and then click *Care For Your Health*.

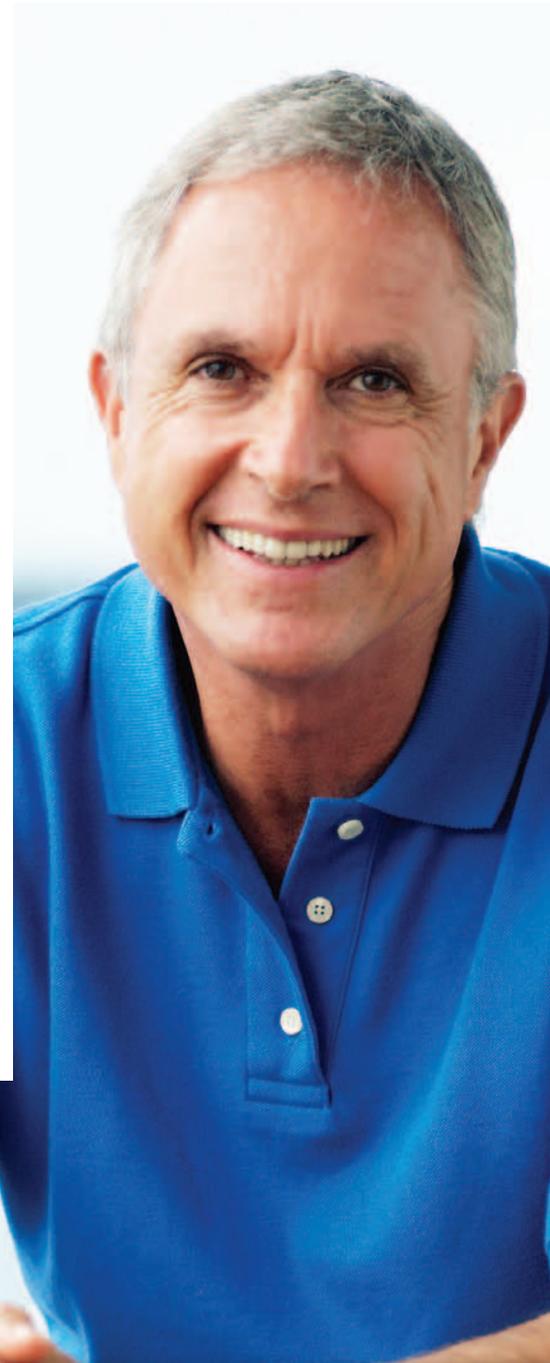
- > grocery store a few extra times while shopping
- > Parking your car far away from where you’re going

# Talk is deep: Communicating with your family about heart failure

When you have heart failure, the support of friends and family can help you cope with your illness. But all too often, it seems difficult for others to understand what you're going through. After all, they don't experience the same anxiety, fatigue or trouble breathing that comes with a heart failure diagnosis.

Resist the urge to shut out those close to you if they say things that offend you or don't seem to grasp the details of your illness. Keep the lines of communication open with these tips:

- > **Speak openly and honestly.** Recognize that questions people ask you — even if ill-phrased — reflect their concern for you. Tell them you appreciate their interest. Also, recognize that care giving or supporting an ill family member involves its own frustrations and stresses; listen as well as talk.
- > **Educate them as you learn more about heart failure yourself.** It may help to review pamphlets from your doctor together or share links to credible websites with heart health information.
- > **Ask for help with specific tasks.** Most often, your friends and family want to support you but don't know how. Give them small, defined jobs — for instance, reminding you to take your medication or helping measure your blood pressure.
- > **Declare your independence.** Make sure your family understands that although you may move more slowly than you used to, you still need regular activity to stay healthy.



## Health checks

**EVERY YEAR**, ask your doctor about these wellness checks. You may need some of them more than once a year.

- ✓ Blood pressure
- ✓ Total cholesterol (HDL, LDL, triglycerides)
- ✓ Monitor your weight
- ✓ Flu shot

Also, check with your doctor to see if your pneumonia shot is up to date.

## REACH OUT

Who knows more about living with heart failure than those facing the same daily issues as you? We'd love to share your feedback to help support and inspire other members living with heart failure. Just email us at [bcnccm@bcbsm.com](mailto:bcnccm@bcbsm.com) with any tips you'd like to share with other readers.





## Take 5: Coming home after hospitalization for heart failure

Were you recently in the hospital for heart failure? If so, you received lots of care from doctors and nurses. But now it's time to focus on caring for yourself at home. By taking these five steps, you will feel better and reduce your chances of needing another hospital stay.

### 1 Manage your meds

You probably take one or more medicines to manage your condition. Be sure you take them as prescribed. Writing down what each medicine is for, how much to take and when to take it may help you to take them correctly.

### 2 Eat right

Build your meals around vegetables, fruit, whole grains and beans. Include lean meats, poultry, fish and fat-free or low-fat milk products. Limit foods high in salt, saturated and trans fats, and added sugar.

### 3 Get enough rest

Get plenty of sleep. If you need to, take time out during the day to nap or put your feet up. You may find that

you can sleep better if you prop up your head with pillows.

### 4 Step on the scale

Because sudden weight gain can mean fluids are building up in your body, it's important to weigh yourself every day. Let your doctor know right away if you gain more than 3 pounds in a day or 5 pounds in a week.

### 5 Follow up with your doctor

Your doctor is your partner in managing your heart failure. Seeing him or her regularly can help you keep track of your overall health by checking key numbers: blood pressure, cholesterol and body mass index. These give a good snapshot of your overall health.



### GET IN TOUCH

Want to talk to a BCN chronic condition management nurse?

Now you can connect online by using our nurse callback form found at [bcbsm.com/bcncmreferral](http://bcbsm.com/bcncmreferral).

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## Health and wellness or prevention information

If you have questions about this program, have received this information in error, would prefer not to receive further information or want to inquire about resources for members with special needs, please call:

**1-800-392-4247 | TTY callers dial 711**

8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday

For Customer Service, please call the number listed on the back of your ID card.



# HEALTHY LIVING



# GOOD EATING

## Orange Couscous with Almonds, Raisins and Mint (Servings: 4)

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 1/4 cup low-sodium chicken broth
- 2 tablespoons raisins
- 1 cup whole wheat couscous
- 1 tablespoon fresh mint, rinsed, dried and chopped (or 1 teaspoon dried)
- 1 tablespoon unsalted sliced almonds, toasted
- 1 medium orange, rinsed for 1 tablespoon zest

in a small saucepan. Bring to a boil over high heat. Add couscous and return to a boil. Cover and remove from the heat.

Let the saucepan stand for about five minutes, until the couscous has absorbed all of the broth. Meanwhile, toast almonds in a toaster oven on a foil-lined tray for about five minutes, or until golden brown.

Remove the lid and fluff the couscous with a fork. Gently mix in the mint, almonds and orange zest.

### DIRECTIONS

Combine chicken broth and raisins

**NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION PER 3/4 CUP SERVING:** 141 calories; 2 g fat; 28 g carbohydrate; 6 g protein; 0 mg cholesterol; 24 mg sodium; 4 g fiber.

Blue Care Network is a nonprofit corporation and independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association. BCN Advantage is an HMO-POS and HMO plan with a Medicare contract. Enrollment in BCN Advantage depends on contract renewal.



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Patient name	Date
Doctor	Phone
Emergency contact	Phone

## GREEN ZONE: SYMPTOMS IN CONTROL

- > No shortness of breath
- > No increase in swelling
- > No chest pain
- > No weight gain, staying at  lbs. or less
- > Normal activity level

### Actions:

- > Take medicines as directed
- > Weigh yourself every day at the same time
- > Follow a low-salt diet
- > Maintain normal activity level
- > Don't smoke, and avoid alcohol

Daily medicine	Dose	Time
Daily medicine	Dose	Time
Daily medicine	Dose	Time
<b>Additional instructions</b>		

## YELLOW ZONE: CAUTION — TAKE ACTION NOW

- > Weight gain between  lbs. and  lbs.
- > Increased swelling in ankles, legs or stomach
- > Increased cough
- > Feeling of fatigue
- > Increased shortness of breath with activity, but gets better at rest
- > Need more pillows to sleep

### Actions:

Call your doctor's office. He or she may need to change your medicine. Add these medicines as directed by your doctor:

Daily medicine	Dose	Time
Daily medicine	Dose	Time
Daily medicine	Dose	Time
<b>Additional instructions</b>		

## RED ZONE: OUT OF CONTROL — GET MEDICAL HELP

- > Yellow zone symptoms don't improve after talking to your doctor
- > Shortness of breath even at rest
- > Wheezing or tight chest at rest
- > Need to sit in a chair to sleep
- > Dizziness, extreme fatigue or falling
- > Weight over  lbs.

### Actions:

**Call your doctor now. You need immediate medical attention.**

# My daily symptom tracker

Monitoring your symptoms is a key part of managing heart failure. Print copies of this monthly tracker. Once you and your doctor have filled in your heart action plan, update this tracker every day. Weigh yourself at about the same time daily, wearing the same amount of clothes. Record your weight on the chart. Then, refer to your action plan to see what zone you are in:

> **GREEN:** \_\_\_\_\_ lbs. or less    > **YELLOW:** \_\_\_\_\_ lbs. to \_\_\_\_\_ lbs.

> **RED:** over \_\_\_\_\_ lbs.

Record your other symptoms by placing an X in the box beside the symptom.

Follow your heart action plan as directed.

	Week of _____						
	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Weight							
Short of breath							
Cough							
Wheezing							
Chest pain							
Swelling							
Feeling dizzy							
Fatigue							
Other							

	Week of _____						
	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Weight							
Short of breath							
Cough							
Wheezing							
Chest pain							
Swelling							
Feeling dizzy							
Fatigue							
Other							

	Week of _____						
	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Weight							
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Wheezing							
Chest pain							
Swelling							
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Fatigue							
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	Week of _____						
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Weight							
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Other							