



INSIDE:
Your heart failure
action plan



Summer 2013

Lifestyles for Heart Failure

Take quitting smoking to heart

If you have heart failure, but haven't been able to quit smoking, don't throw in the towel. Quitting smoking is never easy. Many people don't succeed on the first — or even second — try. But eventually they succeed, so it's worth trying again.

Every puff of a cigarette harms your heart a little bit more. Smoking increases your heart rate and blood pressure. Increased heart rate and blood pressure make your heart work harder than it normally would.

Smoking also damages arteries. Blood clots can form more easily and block the flow of oxygen-rich blood to the heart, leading to a heart attack. When you have heart failure, your heart is already weaker than normal, so it is especially important to not smoke.

Look after your heart

The good news is that as soon as you quit smoking, your body benefits. Twenty minutes after your last cigarette, your heart rate and blood pressure improve. Within 12 hours of being smoke-free,

your blood has less carbon monoxide. And within a few weeks, your circulation improves.

People with heart failure who quit smoking are less likely to have a heart attack. Quitting also lowers your risk for stroke, lung cancer and other cancers. Plus, it gets easier to exercise, breathe, and smell and taste food.

Make a plan

Ready to quit? To boost your chances of success, follow these steps:

- **Get committed.** Think of all the reasons why quitting is a good idea.
- **Pick a quit date.** It could be a special day, such as your birthday, or a random date.
- **Give us a call.** Quit the Nic, our free program, can help. To enroll or for more details, call 1-800-811-1764. Nurses are available from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday through Saturday. TTY users should call 1-800-240-3050.

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.

If you've thought about quitting smoking, Quit the Nic, our free program, offers:

- One-on-one counseling with a registered nurse
- An action plan
- Educational materials

To enroll or for more details, call 1-800-811-1764. Nurses are available from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday through Saturday. TTY users should call 1-800-240-3050.

Real readers; real advice

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 with any tips you'd like to share with other readers.

Don't let heart trouble get you down

It's normal to have mixed emotions when managing a chronic condition such as heart failure. Understandably, people with this condition often feel depressed and overwhelmed. As people learn more about their condition and become more comfortable managing it, these feelings usually go away.

We don't understand why depression is so common with individuals with heart failure but if it is identified and addressed, medical problems may improve also. Symptoms of depression are lack of interest in previously pleasurable activities, guilty feelings, hopelessness, worthlessness, sad mood, lack of initiative and lack of will to live. If you have more than four of these symptoms most of the time for a month, talk to your doctor. There are several options that can be beneficial for your overall health:

Talk it out. Talk about your feelings with someone you trust, such as a family member, friend, clergy member or doctor. People who care about you will want to help. And just talking about a problem may make it feel less overwhelming and distressing.

Reach out. Depressed individuals often withdraw from friends, family and their usual activities. This isolation only makes the problem worse. Though it may be an effort, try to spend time with others, whether it's sharing a meal, playing cards or attending religious services.

Keep moving. Regular exercise can boost your mood and give you energy. Even 10 minutes of walking every day can help.

Learn about managing heart failure. Learning about positive lifestyle changes and following your treatment plan may make you feel more in control.

Talk with your health care provider about treatment. Medicine can help many people who have depression. Therapy can help you cope with depression and troubling emotions. Depression can have a negative effect on heart failure, so you may notice an improvement in your condition with treatment.

Depression can be overcome, so don't wait to get help. With the right support and treatment, you can get back to feeling like yourself. If you need help finding a behavioral or mental health care professional, call the number on the back of your ID card. You do not need a referral from your primary care physician.





My heart action plan

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 _____

Additional instructions _____

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:

Additional medicine _____ Dose _____ Time _____

Additional medicine _____ Dose _____ Time _____

Additional medicine _____ Dose _____ Time _____

Additional instructions _____

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.

1. 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.
2. Record your other symptoms by placing an X in the box beside the symptom.
3. Follow your heart action plan as directed.

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

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

Steps to take to avoid a heart failure emergency

With a diagnosis of heart failure, taking your medicine and following the doctor's recommendations are very important. While heart failure can't be cured, patients can take action to improve symptoms, slow its progress and stay healthier longer.

These steps will help you feel better and will keep you out of the emergency room:

Mind your meds

At the top of the list: Take medicines as prescribed. If you have side effects, let your doctor know right away. Never stop taking medicine or change the dosage without asking your doctor first. Also inform your doctor about over-the-counter drugs or supplements you take, as well as any prescriptions from any other doctors. Keep scheduled doctor and testing appointments so your medicine can be adjusted if necessary.

Weigh in

Check how much you weigh each day at about the same time on the same scale. Be sure to record it. Wear the same type of clothing and no shoes. Because heart failure causes your heart to not pump blood properly, blood returning to the heart backs up. This can cause fluid to collect in your body and result in weight gain, along with swelling in the feet, ankles, legs or abdomen. Watch out for sudden weight gain of 3 pounds or more in a day or two, or 5 pounds or more in a week. This is a sign of edema, or fluid buildup.

Eat right

Talk with your doctor about how much potassium is right for you. Be sure to stick with a diet low in salt, fat and cholesterol. Salt can worsen heart failure by causing fluid buildup in the body. Potassium — found in bananas, beets and green vegetables — can be helpful for people with heart failure. Drugs used to treat the condition can deplete this mineral. Also avoid alcohol and follow your doctor's advice on how much fluid you should drink.

Stay active

Becoming more fit through physical activity can lower risk factors for heart disease and help control heart failure. Ask your

doctor about what type of physical activity is right for you. Other steps that help prevent heart failure from happening: not smoking, maintaining a healthy weight and getting enough sleep.

Plan ahead

Pay really close attention to your symptoms and stay vigilant about any changes in them.

Discuss with your doctor when to get emergency care. Post doctor's office and hospital numbers by your phone and make sure that people who might need to take you to either know how to get there. Also keep a current list of your medicines, medical conditions and allergies handy in case you need them in an emergency.





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Medicare and more

Blue Care Network is a nonprofit corporation and independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association. BCN Advantage HMO-POSSM is a health plan with a Medicare contract.

Health or 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 | 1-800-257-9980 (TTY)

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 AND GOOD EATING

Banana-Yogurt Popsicles

Servings: Makes 4 to 5 small popsicles

Being mindful of your potassium and sodium intake is important.

Bananas are a good source of potassium and are low in sodium.

- 1 cup plain low-fat or fat-free yogurt
- 1 banana, sliced
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 cup fruit juice or fruit chunks

Blend ingredients together and pour into small paper cups. Freeze.

Place a plastic spoon or popsicle stick in each cup when yogurt mixture is half frozen.

To serve, turn cup upside down and run hot water over it until the popsicle slips out. Keep the cup to use as a holder.



Nutritional information per serving: 90 calories; 0 g fat; 18 g carbohydrates; 3 g protein; 0 mg cholesterol; 45 mg sodium.

