

After You Go Home—Week 1 for Heart Failure Patients



Before You Leave the Facility:

- Have a follow-up appointment scheduled with your primary care provider.
 - Make sure you know your doctor's phone number, address, and how you will get to the appointment.

Your doctor's information:

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Address: _____

- Have a plan to pick up new medications.
- Make sure you have a scale to weigh yourself, a blood pressure (BP) monitor, and a method to track your heart rate. Your targets:

Weight: _____ BP: _____

Heart rate: _____

Daily sodium: _____

Daily fluid goal: _____

Daily Tasks:



Medications

- Take your heart failure medications as prescribed.



Diet and Exercise

- Meet your daily sodium and fluid goals.



Symptoms and Follow-ups

- Know the symptoms that require a call to your doctor or for immediate help.
- Log and monitor your symptoms daily and note any changes:
 - ✓ Is your **breathing** normal?
 - ✓ Has your **weight** changed?
 - ✓ Do you have any **swelling**?
 - ✓ Has your **heart rate** or **blood pressure** changed?
 - ✓ Do you feel more **tired** or any changes in energy levels?
 - ✓ Are you experiencing **appetite** changes?
 - ✓ Do you have any **nausea**?
 - ✓ Have you noticed **forgetfulness**?

Day 1. The morning after you get home from the facility.



- Review your discharge instructions from the facility.
- Create a daily medication schedule to help you stay on track (think about meal times).
- Review the medication list the facility provided and make sure it is correct.
- Find a notebook to start recording your weight, blood pressure, and heart rate. Write down any questions or observations you have made.

TIP: Create your own medication list if you don't already have one and make sure you include any vitamins, over-the-counter medications, or prescriptions from another doctor.

Key:



Medications



Symptoms & Follow-ups



Diet & Fluids



Exercise

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Day 2. Su M Tu W Th F Sa (Circle the day of the week to keep on track)



- How are you feeling? Make sure you write down how you feel and share any concerns or questions you have on your follow-up call.



- Explore your pantry and fridge to find food and snacks that are low in sodium. Create a meal plan to help you make healthy choices.

Day 3. Su M Tu W Th F Sa



- Have you been taking all of your medications? If not, what can you do differently? You may need to call the doctor.

TIP: Mention to your doctor any new medications or changes from your facility stay.



- Get up and start moving. Identify an activity that you enjoy doing and that will help you reach your physical activity goals.

Day 4. Su M Tu W Th F Sa



- Look in your notebook and review your symptoms. Have there been any changes over the past few days?



- Reduce your stress. Find a relaxing activity to do each day such as deep breathing exercises, listening to music, solving a crossword puzzle, meditating, or practicing yoga.

Day 5. Su M Tu W Th F Sa



- Check in with your family. Have they noticed any changes such as swelling, confusion, or fatigue?



- Reading and understanding food labels is a vital skill to help manage your heart failure symptoms. Focus on how many milligrams (mg) of sodium is in a serving to meet your recommended target listed on the front page (often less than 2,000 mg per day).

TIP: Common high-sodium foods to avoid: pizza, canned soup, and packaged lunch meats.

Day 6 and 7. Prepare for your follow-up visit on:



- Confirm your appointment with your doctor and make sure you have a plan to get there.
- Plan to share with your doctor if you are having a hard time meeting your medication, diet, and exercise goals. Sharing details with your doctor can help him or her provide additional support and make changes when needed.

Here is a list of things you need to take with you to your appointment:

1. A full list of home medications/ vitamins/over-the-counter medications.
2. Your notebook where you wrote down your:
 - a. Symptoms
 - b. Side effects
 - c. Questions you have for the doctor
3. The discharge paperwork given to you at the facility.

1. American Heart Association (AHA). Managing Heart Failure Symptoms. Accessed Oct. 6, 2020. <https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/heart-failure/warning-signs-of-heart-failure/managing-heart-failure-symptoms>
2. AHA. Communicating With Your Advanced Heart Failure Healthcare Team. Accessed Oct. 6, 2020. <https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/heart-failure/living-with-heart-failure-and-managing-advanced-hf/communicating-with-your-advanced-heart-failure-healthcare-team>
3. Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Heart Failure. Accessed Oct. 6, 2020. https://www.cdc.gov/heartdisease/heart_failure.htm
4. AHA. Understanding Ingredients on Food Labels. Accessed Oct. 6, 2020. <https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/healthy-eating/eat-smart/nutrition-basics/understanding-ingredients-on-food-labels>
5. AHA. The Salty Six Infographic. Accessed Oct. 6, 2020. <https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/healthy-eating/eat-smart/sodium/salty-six-infographic>