

MANAGING YOUR CHF

(CONGESTIVE HEART FAILURE)

Guidelines, resources and tips to help you
live better with CHF



A wellness publication prepared for members of
Samaritan Health Plans

OUR MEMBERS. OUR NEIGHBORS.



Samaritan

Health Plan Operations

815 NW Ninth Street, Corvallis

You are not alone—about 5 million Americans have congestive heart failure (CHF).

Take an active role in managing your CHF. It can help you live well with your condition.



What is congestive heart failure (CHF)?

The heart's job is to pump oxygen rich blood to your body's organs. CHF is a condition that can happen when the heart does not pump correctly.

Signs of CHF are different for each side of the heart. Shortness of breath is a common sign of left-sided heart failure. Swelling of the ankles, legs, neck and abdomen can be a sign of right-sided heart failure.

What causes CHF?

Heart failure can be caused by conditions that have damaged or weakened your heart. Some of these conditions can be present without you knowing it:

- **Coronary Artery Disease (CAD)**— This is the most common cause of CHF. Over time, arteries that supply blood to your heart muscle become narrow from plaque build-up.
- **High blood pressure (Hypertension)**— When your blood pressure is high, your heart has to work harder to circulate blood throughout your body. Over time, the heart muscle may become thicker to make up for the extra work. This causes the heart to become stiff or too weak to pump your blood.

Certain lifestyle factors can also increase your risk of developing CHF such as:

- **Alcohol use:** Drinking too much alcohol can weaken the heart.
- **Smoking:** Tobacco use can increase your risk of heart failure.
- **Obesity or being overweight.**
- **An unhealthy diet high in saturated and trans fats, cholesterol and salt (sodium).**



While you may not be able to reverse the effects of CHF, you can control some of the symptoms. Here are some important tips:

Eat a heart healthy diet

- Low in cholesterol and saturated fats and high in Omega-3 fatty acids.
- High in fruits and vegetables.
- Low in salt (sodium).
 - There are many sources of salt and not just the kind that we add to our food.
 - All salt needs to be carefully tracked when you have CHF.
 - Become a salt detective—learn how to read food labels and avoid eating foods containing higher amounts of salt.
 - Ask your health care provider what is a safe amount of salt for you.

Be physically active

Talk with your health care provider to find out what physical activity is right for you.

Quit smoking

Tobacco smoke can damage your heart and lungs and make your CHF worse.

Avoid second-hand smoke

Nicotine and carbon monoxide in tobacco smoke can lower the amount of oxygen in the blood.

Weigh yourself every day

Write down your weight every day:

- Weigh yourself first thing in the morning after you go to the bathroom. Each time you weigh in, wear similar clothing and remove your shoes.
- Do not skip a day of weighing unless your health care provider tells you to.

If you gain two or more pounds in one day, or five or more pounds in one week, it could mean your CHF has gotten worse. Call your health care provider to find out if you need to be seen. Bring your written weights with you to your appointment.

Track your blood pressure

High blood pressure stiffens blood vessels and makes the heart work harder, causing increased strain on your heart. Take and write down your blood pressure everyday and bring your readings with you to your next appointment.

See your health care provider

Be sure to tell your health care provider if you are feeling sad or depressed, this can be related to your CHF.

Take your CHF medications as directed by your health care provider.

Be sure to ask your health care provider or pharmacist any time you have questions about your medications.

Do not forget to get your seasonal flu shot and a pneumonia shot.



Take this quiz

IN THE PAST 2 WEEKS:

Yes No

- Is my energy level lower than normal?
- Do I get short of breath during the day or at night?
- Do I have a nagging cough? Does it sound wet?
- Are my clothes or shoes feeling tight?
- Are my feet and ankles swelling?

What your answers mean

If you answered **“YES”** to any of these questions, please talk with your health care provider.

If you answered **“NO”** to all the questions, keep your regular checkup appointment to be sure that your CHF is still under control.

If your CHF gets worse...

**Do not wait until your next appointment.
Call your health care provider for advice.**

Below you will find information on local programs and support groups. Some programs may charge a fee. Those fees may be covered by your Samaritan health plan. Check your member handbook or call your plan for more information.

CHRONIC CONDITION PROGRAMS

Living Well with Chronic Conditions

Benton, Lincoln & Linn Counties, 541-768-6070
Six-week workshop that teaches practical skills for living a healthy life with an ongoing health condition.

TOBACCO USE

Oregon Quit Line

1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669)

Spanish Language Line

1-877-2NO-FUME (1-877-266-3863)

www.oregonquitline.org

HEART HEALTH EDUCATION AND SUPPORT

Albany 541-812-5441

Lebanon 541-451-7178

Corvallis 541-768-5323