

Tips for Managing Your Congestive Heart Failure

Take your medicine exactly as your doctor prescribed.

Don't add salt to your food.

Ask your doctor about "low salt" or "no salt" products.

Read labels and avoid foods high in salt or sodium.

Weigh yourself EVERY morning and write it down.

Limit water and other liquids to no more than the amount your doctor advises.

Follow the exercise program your doctor prescribed.

CALL YOUR DOCTOR IF:

- You gain 3 or more pounds in a week.
- You have trouble breathing.
- You have a cough that won't go away, especially at night.
- Your feet and ankles swell more than usual.
- You have dizzy spells or you faint.
- You see greenish or yellowish circles around things.
- You feel sick to your stomach.
- You have tightness or pain in your chest, neck, or arm.
- You begin urinating less frequently.
- Your pulse is less than 50 or more than 100.
- You think you're having side effects from your medicine.

Tips for Managing Your Congestive Heart Failure: Effective Doctor Visits

Always bring

- Problem descriptions
- List of all medications

Ask “Why?”

You are more likely to follow your doctor’s recommendations if you understand the purpose.

Be open and honest with your doctor

If you can’t follow your doctor’s recommendation, say so and explain why. Discuss your concerns. Give your doctor the whole picture.

Write down important information

Writing it down ensures that when you get home, you will not wonder what was said.

Review and summarize at the end of the visit

Reviewing ensures accuracy. Ask your doctor if you can briefly read aloud from your notes.

Tips for Managing Your Congestive Heart Failure: Salt

What's the big deal?

The average American eats almost ten times more salt than the body needs. For people with congestive heart failure, that's a big deal. Normally, the body keeps a delicate balance between salt and water. When you eat too much salt, the balance is upset, causing swelling and other signs of heart failure to worsen.

How much do I need?

Your body needs only about 500 mg of salt per day – less than $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon. Your doctor can tell you your limit, but for many people with congestive heart failure, it's usually around 2,000 to 3,000 mg.

What can I do?

- Remove salt from your table and fill the shaker with your favorite dried spices and herbs.
- Don't add salt to your food.
- Don't use salt when cooking.
- Read labels to spot hidden sources of salt.
- Choose low salt foods.
- Buy fresh meats and vegetables.
- Season with herbs, spices, vinegars, and wines.

What foods should I avoid?

- Cured and processed meats such as bacon, cold cuts, hot dogs, potted meats, sausage, dried beef, and kosher meats
- Canned fish such as tuna, crab, sardines, and anchovies
- Canned soups
- Canned vegetables
- Prepared foods

- Salted snacks
- Cheeses and buttermilk
- Sauces and seasonings like soy sauce, steak sauce, salad dressings, mayonnaise, catsup, mustard, Worcestershire, seasonings with salt in the name

What should I look for on labels?

Salt and sodium compounds have many names and are found in a lot of foods we eat every day. Common salt or sodium compounds include:

- MSG (monosodium glutamate)
- Baking soda
- Baking powder
- Sodium benzoate
- Sodium nitrite
- Sodium propionate
- Sodium saccharin
- Disodium phosphate
- Any compound with “salt”, “sodium”, or “NACL” in its name.

Tips for Managing Your Congestive Heart Failure: Where's the Salt?

Note: Individual products vary. Refer to nutritional labels for specific information.

Food Groups	Sodium, milligrams
Breads, Cereals	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cooked cereal, rice, pasta, unsalted• Ready-to-eat cereal• Bread	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Trace per ½ cup• 100-350 per ounce• 110-175 per slice
Fruits	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fruit, fresh, frozen, canned	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Trace per ½ cup
Vegetables	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Vegetables, fresh or frozen, cooked without salt• Vegetables, canned, or frozen with sauce• Tomato juice, canned• Vegetable soup, canned	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Less than 70 per ½ cup• 140-460 per ½ cup• 660 per ¾ cup• 810 per cup
Meat, Poultry, Fish	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fresh meat, poultry, fish• Tuna, canned, water pack• Bologna• Ham, lean roasted	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Less than 90 per 3 ounces• 300 per 3 ounces• 580 per 2 ounces• 1,025 per 3 ounces
Milk, Yogurt, Cheese	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Milk• Yogurt• Natural cheeses, such as cheddar or swiss• Process cheeses, such as American	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 120 per cup• 170 per 8 ounces• 110-275 per 1-1/2 ounces• 790 per 2 ounces

Other

- Salad dressing
- Catsup, steak sauce
- Soy sauce
- Salt
- Dill pickle
- Potato chips, salted
- Corn chips, salted
- Peanuts, roasted in oil, salted
- 80-220 per tbsp.
- 180-230 per tbsp.
- 1,020 per tbsp.
- 2,000 per tsp.
- 930 per one medium
- 135 per ounce
- 235 per ounce
- 120 per ounce

Tips for Managing Your Congestive Heart Failure: Low Salt Seasoning Mixtures

Try these mixtures instead of salt on your favorite foods!

Poultry

- Rosemary and thyme
- Tarragon, marjoram, and onion and garlic powders
- Cumin, bay leaf, and saffron or turmeric
- Ginger, cinnamon, and allspice
- Curry powder, thyme, and onion powder

Fish and Seafood

- Cumin and oregano
- Tarragon, thyme, parsley flakes, and garlic powder
- Thyme, fennel, saffron, and red pepper
- Ginger, sesame, and white pepper
- Cilantro, parsley flakes, cumin, and garlic powder

Beef

- Thyme, bay leaf, and instant minced onion
- Ginger, dry mustard, and garlic powder
- Dill, nutmeg, and allspice
- Black pepper, bay leaf, and cloves
- Chili powder, cinnamon, and oregano

Pork

- Caraway, red pepper, and paprika
- Thyme, dry mustard, and sage
- Oregano and bay leaf
- Anise, ginger, and sesame
- Tarragon, bay leaf, and instant minced garlic

Vegetables

- Green beans: marjoram and rosemary; caraway and dry mustard
- Broccoli: ginger and garlic powder; sesame and nutmeg
- Cabbage: celery seeds and dill; curry powder and nutmeg

- Carrots: cinnamon and nutmeg; ginger and onion powder
- Corn: chili powder and cumin; dill and onion powder
- Peas: anise and onion powder; rosemary and marjoram
- Spinach: curry powder and ginger; nutmeg and garlic powder
- Winter squash: cinnamon and nutmeg; allspice and red pepper
- Tomatoes: basil and rosemary; cinnamon and ginger

All Purpose Herb and Spice Blends

Use these blends at home or take with you when you eat out. These blends can be used instead of salt on meats, poultry, fish, vegetables, soups, and salads.

American Heart Association Herb Shaker

½ tsp. cayenne pepper	1 tsp. mace, ground
1 tsp. basil, ground	1 tsp. onion powder
1 tbsp. garlic powder	1 tsp. black pepper, ground
1 tsp. thyme, ground	1 tsp. sage, ground
1 tsp. parsley, dry flakes	1 tsp. marjoram
1 tsp. savory, ground	

Combine ingredients and mix well. Spoon into a shaker.

American Spice Trade Association All Purpose Spice Blend

5 tsp. onion powder	1-1/4 thyme leaves, crushed
2-1/2 tsp. garlic powder	½ tsp. white pepper, ground
2-1/2 tsp. paprika	¼ tsp. celery seed
2-1/2 tsp. dry mustard	

Combine ingredients and mix well. Spoon into a shaker.

Tips for Managing Your Congestive Heart Failure:

Tips for Eating Out

Safe Restaurant Choices

- Fish or chicken in place of fatty meats. Make sure it is broiled, baked, grilled, steamed, or poached instead of fried
- Lots of fresh vegetable side dishes. Ask that sauces, butter, and salt be left off
- Baked or roasted potatoes instead of fried
- Fresh fruit, sherbet, or fruit sorbet in place of cake, pie, or ice cream desserts
- Request that your food be prepared without added salt
- Look for a “heart smart” symbol next to a menu item, this usually means the food is low in fat and cholesterol
- When it seems everything on the menu is off limits, ask if the chef will make you a fruit or vegetable platter

Avoid

- Pickled foods
- Sauces with catsup, cream, or bouillon base
- Croutons, olives, salted nuts, and bacon bits at the salad bar
- Salad dressings – use vinegar or squeeze lemon juice on your salad instead
- Butter, margarine, and sour cream
- Processed cheese products
- Chips, salted nuts, and pretzels

Oriental Restaurants

- Enjoy stir fried chicken, fish, and vegetable dishes
- Choose steamed rice over fried
- Steer clear of soy sauce and deep fried foods
- Ask that your food be prepared without MSG (monosodium glutamate)

Italian Restaurants

- Red sauces made with fresh, not canned, tomatoes, are best
- Try a fish dish or pasta without meat
- Watch out for meatballs, sausages, pepperoni, and proscuitto, they're loaded with salt, fat, and cholesterol
- Go easy on the parmesan cheese

Mexican Restaurants

- Chicken fajitas are a good choice
- Make sure salsa is made from fresh, not canned tomatoes – if it tastes salty, limit how much you eat
- Avoid cheese dips made from processed cheeses, refried beans, fried rice, and chips

Weight Diary

Note: Call your doctor if you gain 3 or more pounds in one week. It may be a sign that your Congestive Heart Failure is worsening.

Weigh yourself:

- Every day at the same time
- Before you eat
- Using the same scale
- After you urinate
- In the nude

Day	Date	Weight
Sunday		
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		
Saturday		

Day	Date	Weight
Sunday		
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Day	Date	Weight
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Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		
Saturday		

Day	Date	Weight
Sunday		
Monday		
Tuesday		
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Friday		
Saturday		

Exercise Tips

- Talk to your doctor about a safe activity plan.
- Start slow, build slow.
- Plan frequent rest periods throughout the day.
- Sit down and rest if you become even mildly short of breath.
- Always try to elevate legs and feet while sitting.
- Avoid extreme temperatures.

Exercise Plan

I have an appointment to talk to my doctor on ___/___/___

My activity of choice is _____

My goal is to do this activity _____ times per _____

My reward for reaching this goal is _____

Week 1	Activity	Time or distance
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		
Saturday		
Sunday		

Week 2	Activity	Time or distance
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		
Saturday		
Sunday		

Week 3	Activity	Time or distance
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		
Saturday		
Sunday		

Week 4	Activity	Time or distance
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		
Saturday		
Sunday		

Week 5	Activity	Time or distance
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		
Saturday		
Sunday		

Week 6	Activity	Time or distance
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		
Saturday		
Sunday		

Tips for Managing Your Congestive Heart Failure: Diuretics

Common Medications

- Chlorothiazide (Diuril)
- Chlorothalidone (Hygroton)
- Hydrochlorothiazide (Esidrix, Hydrodiuril, HCTZ)
- Furosemide (Lasix)

How Diuretics Work

- Removes excess fluid
- Increases urination
- Lowers blood pressure

What You Should Know

- Diuretics can affect potassium and magnesium levels in your body.
- Your doctor may prescribe potassium and magnesium supplements.
- Periodic blood tests are needed to check potassium and magnesium levels.
- Tell your doctor if you use salt substitutes.

When You Should Call the Doctor

If you have:

- Leg cramps
- Dizziness
- Gout
- Skin rash

Tips for Managing Your Congestive Heart Failure: ACE Inhibitors

Common Medications

- Captopril (Capoten)
- Enalapril (Vasotec)
- Lisinopril (Prinivil, Zestril)

How ACE Inhibitors Work

- Opens arteries and makes it easier for the heart to pump
- Reduces salt and water retention
- Lowers blood pressure
- Helps the heart squeeze more effectively

What You Should Know

- May cause high potassium levels
- Tell your doctor if you use salt substitutes
- Tell your doctor if you develop a dry cough
- May cause temporary problems with kidneys
- Periodic blood tests are needed to check potassium level and kidney function
- May affect blood sugar levels in diabetics
- May alter taste

When You Should Call the Doctor

If you have

- Difficulty breathing
- Dizziness or fainting
- Swelling of face and tongue

Tips for Managing Your Congestive Heart Failure: Digitalis

Common Medications

- Digoxin (Lanoxin, Lanoxicaps, Novodigoxin)
- Digitoxin (Crystodigin, Digitaline)

How Digitalis Works

- Strengthens heart beat
- Regulates a heart beat that is too fast or irregular

What You Should Know

- Periodic blood tests are needed to monitor level of digitalis
- Older patients with kidney or thyroid problems may be monitored more closely
- Do not use antacids within 2 hours of taking digitalis

When You Should Call the Doctor

If you have:

- Nausea
- Mental confusion
- Skin rash
- Blurred vision or yellow colored vision
- Pulse is less than 50 beats per minute

Tips for Managing Your Congestive Heart Failure: Beta Blockers

Common Medications

- Atenolol (Tenormin)
- Metoprolol (Lopressor, Toprol XL)
- Propranolol Hydrochloride (Inderal, Inderal LA)

How Beta Blockers Work

- Relaxes heart muscle
- Slows heart beat
- Lowers blood pressure

What You Should Know

- May cause asthma symptoms to worsen
- Can cause fatigue, depression, or sexual problems
- Should be taken with meals
- May alter blood sugar levels in diabetics and can mask hypoglycemic reactions (low blood sugar)
- Can cause leg cramps in people with peripheral vascular disease

When You Should Call the Doctor

If you have:

- Skin rash
- Severe hypoglycemic reaction
- Trouble breathing
- Pulse less than 50 beats per minute
- Confusion
- Extreme fatigue

Tips for Managing Your Congestive Heart Failure: Calcium Channel Blockers

Common Medications

- Nifedipine (Adalat CC, Procardia, Procardia XL)
- Verapamil (Calan, Calan SR, Isoptin, Isoptin SR)
- Diltiazem (Cardizem, Cardizem CD, Dilacor XR)
- Amlodipine (Norvasc)

How Calcium Channel Blockers Work

- Relaxes heart muscle
- Promotes blood flow to the heart
- Lowers blood pressure

What You Should Know

- These medicines do not affect calcium in your bones
- May cause headaches when first starting
- May cause constipation
- To avoid dizziness, arise slowly from sitting or lying positions
- May cause swelling in feet and ankles

When You Should Call the Doctor

If you have:

- Skin rash
- Swelling in feet and ankles
- Pulse less than 50 beats per minute
- Pulse becomes irregular
- Dizziness that won't go away
- Headaches for more than 2 weeks

Tips for Managing Your Congestive Heart Failure: Anti-Coagulants

Common Medications

- Warfarin (Coumadin, Pansarfarin, Sofarin)
- Heparin

How Anti-Coagulants Work

- Thins the blood
- Prevents blood clotting

What You Should Know

- Regular blood tests needed to monitor clotting times
- Take special care to avoid accidents
- Watch for signs of bleeding: blood in stools, urine, or vomit; nosebleeds, bruising, or bleeding gums
- Take medication exactly as prescribed at the same time every day
- Use electric shaver and soft toothbrush
- Check with doctor before using any over-the-counter medicines, especially aspirin
- Be consistent with the amount of foods you eat that contain Vitamin K, such as dark green and green leafy vegetables
- Carry a card or wear a Medic Alert tag that tells the medications you take

When You Should Call the Doctor

If you have:

- Signs of bleeding
- Menstrual periods that are heavier than usual
- Not had a blood test for clotting time in more than a month

Tips for Managing Your Congestive Heart Failure: Nitrates (nitroglycerin)

Common Medications

- Nitro-bid
- Minitran
- Nitro-dur
- Nitrostat
- Transderm
- Tridil
- Isordil
- Minitran
- Diltrate

How Nitrates (nitroglycerin) Work

- Relaxes and dilates blood vessels
- Increases blood flow to heart muscle
- Relieves angina

What You Should Know

- Comes in many forms: pastes, patches, tablets, and sprays
- Can lower blood pressure, so arise slowly from sitting or lying positions
- May cause headache lasting 5-20 minutes but usually stops occurring with continued use
- May cause flushing
- Avoid alcohol use – a severe reaction can occur

When You Should Call the Doctor

If you have:

- Skin rash if using paste, cream, or patch
- Extreme dizziness, fainting, or flushing
- Chest pain that is not relieved
- Pulse more than 100 beats per minute
- Blurred vision
- Dry mouth
- Unusual swelling

Tips for Managing Your Congestive Heart Failure: Aspirin (acetylsalicylic acid)

Common Medications

- Bayer
- Anacin
- Ecotrin
- Excedrin
- St. Joseph
- Bufferin

How Aspirin (acetylsalicylic acid) Works

- Mild blood thinner
- Relieves pain
- Reduces fever
- Reduces inflammation

What You Should Know

- Read labels, many products contain aspirin
- Take with milk or food
- If you take Coumadin (Warfarin), should not use aspirin without doctor's permission
- Can cause stomach irritation, ulcers, and bleeding
- Can cause bruising

When You Should Call the Doctor

If you have:

- Signs of stomach irritation: pain, nausea, vomiting blood, or black stools
- Rash
- Ringing in the ears or deafness

Tips for Managing Your Congestive Heart Failure: Antiarrhythmics

Common Medications

- Betapace
- Amiodarone
- Cordarone
- Procan
- Tambocor
- Norpace
- Quinidine

How Antiarrhythmics Work

- Controls and prevents irregular heart beat

What You Should Know

- May require blood tests to monitor level
- May increase risk for sunburn – use sunscreen or protective clothing
- Avoid grapefruit juice
- Lowers blood pressure
- Take with food to avoid stomach irritation

When You Should Call the Doctor

If you have:

- Difficulty breathing
- Unusual weakness or fatigue
- Joint pain
- Unusual or increased swelling
- Very fast pulse – more than 100 beats per minute
- Very slow pulse – less than 50 beats per minute
- Irregular pulse
- Diarrhea, nausea, or vomiting

Food Diary

Share this diary with your health care professionals to make sure you are safely managing your Congestive Heart Failure.

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
B r k f s t							
L u n c h							
D i n n e r							
S n a c k s							