

## Action Plan to Prevent Worsening of Heart Failure Symptoms

By doing these 4 things you will **prevent fluid from building-up in your body** (in your lungs and legs). It is this fluid that causes your symptoms such as **shortness of breath** or **lower leg swelling**.

**Following this plan will help decrease your risk of returning to hospital with heart failure.** Discuss it with your family and keep it in a visible place like your fridge so it will remind you what to do.

Some of your heart failure symptoms are due to  
too much build-up of fluid, for you these are:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

### Your 4 important actions are:

1. **Your total fluid intake each day is:** \_\_\_\_\_ Litres
2. **Your target weight is** \_\_\_\_\_ Kg or \_\_\_\_\_ pounds. This is your weight when you do not have heart failure symptoms.
3. **You need to weigh yourself each day.** In the morning, **before** breakfast is best (wearing similar clothes). This is to **detect fluid gain before you notice symptoms** so you can do something about it.
4. **If you gain weight:** you need either call your doctor or increase furosemide (Lasix®) as directed below **and** call your doctor. This **extra furosemide will remove the extra fluid – you will pass this extra fluid** out in your urine. So you will urinate more, but only for a short time.
  - **If your weight increases to** \_\_\_\_\_ **in 1 day or** \_\_\_\_\_ **in 1 week either:**
    - Call your doctor OR
    - Take one **extra** furosemide tablet (\_\_\_\_\_ mg) ONCE each day for 2 days only, **AND** call your doctor to notify him/her that you have started your action plan.

Doctor's name: \_\_\_\_\_ Office Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

## HOW TAKING MEDICATIONS TO TREAT HEART FAILURE CAN HELP YOU

**What is heart failure?** Heart failure means that your heart does not pump blood out to the rest of your body as well as it should. Your body responds to this by holding onto fluid. You may feel tired. Fluid build up in your ankles, feet and lower legs can make walking difficult; fluid build-up in your lungs can make you feel short of breath either when you are walking or even when you are resting, you may need have to sit up to be able to sleep.

**Why is this important?** Heart failure (HF) can limit your ability to do usual activities, reduce your quality of life and you can even die sooner. You may need to go to hospital if you get fluid build up so much that you get short of breath or if leg swelling makes it hard to walk. You also may need to go to hospital for other reasons as HF affects other organs of your body, like your kidneys.

**1) You can prevent worsening of heart failure symptoms and decrease hospital visits if you:** Take medications to prevent fluid build up, and follow your action plan.

**2) You are more likely to improve your ability do usual activities, improve your quality of life and live longer, if you:** Take medications to help your heart pump better (whether you need these, depends on how poorly your heart pumps).

**Ask your pharmacist to explain how to know if your medication is working or causing a side effect. You could feel dizzy when you stand up,** ask for information about this. Side effects can **easily be treated** if you know what to look out for, then see your doctor if you have them. Your doctor can adjust the medication or find alternative medications to help you.

**Ask your pharmacist for a Medication Plan for Sick Days.**

This plan can help avoid certain side effects (like low blood pressure) when you are unwell for any reason and drinking less fluid than normal.

### **Diuretics, daily weighing, fluid intake and action plan.**

- Diuretics (e.g. furosemide) are needed to get rid of extra fluid. If you do need to get up during the night to use the bathroom, ask your doctor or pharmacist to help you adjust the time you take your diuretic so that you can sleep at night and do your outdoor activities with the least interruption.
- **It is important that you take diuretics because they help avoid fluid build up. Staying at your target weight will avoid worsening of symptoms and needing to go to hospital.**
- Diuretics, weighing and limiting your fluid intake all work on **avoiding fluid build up**.
- Follow your action plan to avoid worsening of symptoms if you do gain weight (as fluid build-up).

### **Medications to help your heart pump better:**

- You may need medications to help your heart pump better. Ask your doctor or pharmacist to let you know which medications help you by working this way.
- It will be hard for you to know if these are working (but they really are helping you).
- Patients who take these kind of medications are more likely to: have less chance of needing to go to hospital, be able to do usual activities, have improved quality of life and can live longer.
- Taking these medications could allow you to have these same benefits.



Making better  
decisions together  
with patients  
and families

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