

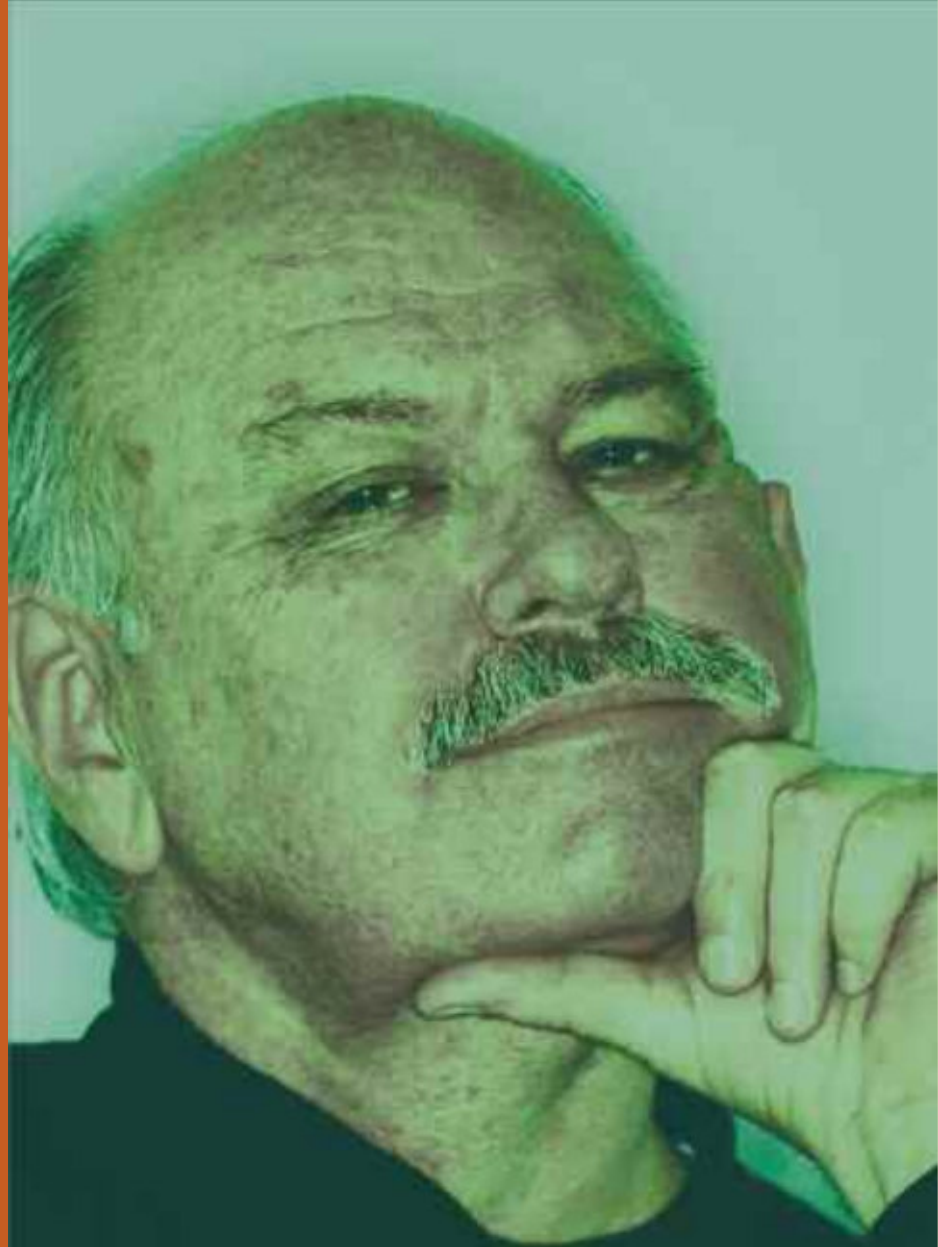
Congestive Heart Failure

Research has shown that patients who take an active role in their health care get better results. This workbook is meant to help you understand what to expect during your stay in the hospital so you can take an active role in your care. You should feel confident asking your doctor about any questions you may have regarding your treatment plan.

The information covers a usual hospital stay for a patient with this condition. You may have certain issues that require your hospital stay to be increased, or you may be sent home sooner if you are doing well.

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Ten Steps You Can Take to Make Sure Your Hospital Stay Is a Safe One

- 1** Make sure that your doctors and nurses know about every medicine you are taking. This should include prescription and over-the-counter medicines, and supplements such as vitamins and herbs. Let them know if you have recently taken any blood thinners such as aspirin, Coumadin, Bufferin, Motrin or ibuprofen. If you have recently stopped taking such medicines, tell the doctor or nurse the date on which these medicines were stopped.
- 2** Make sure your doctors and nurses know about any allergies and reactions you have had to foods and medicines. Let your doctor and nurse know if you have any tendency to bleed or if you bruise easily.
- 3** Always make sure that you fully understand the information about your tests and treatments. Ask questions if you do not understand!
- 4** You should ask all health care workers who have direct contact with you if they have washed their hands. Research has shown that 30 percent to 50 percent of infections that patients have while in the hospital can be prevented by handwashing. Handwashing is the single best way to prevent the spread of bacteria. This is a very simple plan with really important results!
- 5** You or your family should learn as much as possible about your condition by talking to your nurses and doctors and reading medical information.
- 6** Always be sure you know who is providing care to you. You should expect hospital staff members to be wearing identification badges (preferably photo ID) and to introduce themselves and their roles before they provide care.
- 7** Before you undergo any procedure, your doctor will explain what will be done and ask you to sign a consent form. It is very important for you and your doctor to discuss the plan thoroughly and for you to agree to it, so you know exactly what will happen to you. Make sure you understand the benefits and the risks of any procedures or treatments that you are going to have.
- 8** Ask your doctors or nurses about the results of any tests or procedures that you have had, and if and how those results change the plan for your care.
- 9** When you are ready to go home, ask your doctors and nurses to explain the home treatment plan for you in detail and in words you can understand. This includes information about your medicines, caring for any incisions or wounds and finding out when you can get back to your usual activities.
- 10** When you are prescribed new medicines, ask for written information and make sure you understand the following things:
 - What is the medicine for?
 - How should I take it and for how long?
 - What should I do if I forget a dose?
 - What side effects can this medicine cause?
 - Is this medicine safe to take with the other medicines and supplements that I am presently taking?
 - What other safety measures should I follow while using this medicine?
 - What storage conditions are required for this medicine?

What To Expect On The Day You Are Admitted

- It is important to determine the exact cause of your shortness of breath. Several tests may be done in the emergency room or on the patient care unit. These may include a chest x-ray, EKG, some blood tests and monitoring of your oxygen level.
- You may have an intravenous (IV) line and may receive doses of a medicine to help get rid of the extra fluid in your body.
- You may also receive frequent potassium supplements.
- You may receive oxygen through a mask or small prongs that rest just inside your nose.
- Frequent checks of your lungs, heart rate and blood pressure may be taken to determine if you are improving and to change your medicines if needed.
- Your fluids will be restricted and you will receive a low-salt diet. You will be weighed daily.
- You may be allowed to get out of bed as tolerated. When sitting in a chair, your legs should be elevated.

Safety Tip

Make sure that someone is available to assist you when you get out of bed for the first few times as you may feel weaker than usual. Ask for help getting to the bathroom.

Key Activities:

- The nursing staff may continue to monitor your heartbeat, blood pressure, temperature, lung sounds and oxygen levels very closely.
- You may have more blood tests to see if you are improving.
- You may have an echocardiogram, which is a test that uses sound waves to make a picture of the heart.
- It will be important to balance rest with activity. Take walks in the hallway three to four times a day if you can.
- Your IV medicines may be changed to pills and your IV line may be removed. Your oxygen may be stopped.
- You may begin to get ready to go home if your doctor determines that the following items are improved:
 - Your weight (baseline dry weight).
 - Your oxygen level.
 - Lung sounds are clearing, chest pain symptoms are gone, your blood tests are normal, kidney status is improved and there are no other active medical problems.

Additional Steps to Decrease the Heart's Workload:

- Lose weight if necessary.
- Don't smoke. Smoking worsens the symptoms of heart failure and of heart disease. Discuss with your doctor a plan to quit smoking.
- Avoid temperature extremes. The body works harder to keep body temperature normal when you are too hot or too cold.
- Limit drinks with caffeine to one or two cups per day.
- Talk with your doctor about how much alcohol (if any) is OK for you. Alcohol weakens the heart and your symptoms may actually improve if you stop drinking alcohol.
- Try to stay away from people who have colds or the flu. Ask your doctor if you should have a yearly flu shot and the one-time pneumonia shot.

Note:

Remind everyone who comes into contact with you to wash his or her hands.

Also, be sure to schedule a follow-up office visit with your doctor.

Self Care

- Weigh yourself each day, before breakfast. Record your weight.
- Make sure that you learn what you can about any new medicines you may receive. Ask for written information, and make sure you understand the following things:
 - What is the medicine for?
 - How should I take it and for how long?
 - What should I do if I forget a dose?
 - What side effects can this medicine cause?
 - Is this medicine safe to take with the other medicines and supplements that I am taking?
 - What other safety measures should I follow while using this medicine?
 - What storage conditions are required for this medicine?
- Make sure you have a schedule to take your medicines and you follow it closely. Taking your medicines regularly is an important part of your treatment.
- Talk to your doctor if you are worried about your ability to pay for the medicines. If you are able to pay for the medicines but you can't get to the pharmacy to buy the medicines, your doctor may help you identify a plan so that you will be able to get your medicines.
- Get your prescriptions filled before your medicines run out.
- Take your medicines every day. If you tend to forget to take any of them, talk to your doctor or nurse about ways to help you remember and what to do if you miss a dose.
- Follow a low-salt diet. Do not add salt at the table or during cooking. Avoid salty or processed foods such as canned foods that have a high salt content. Read labels and avoid foods with more than 300 mg of sodium per serving.
- Discuss any activity limits with your doctor. Generally, you should be as active as you can although you should avoid lifting anything heavier than 10 pounds. Break down tasks into smaller pieces to avoid becoming short of breath. Allow for frequent rest periods during the day.

When to Call a Doctor

- Weight gain of 2 pounds or more per day for two days in a row.
- Chest pain or pressure.
- Shortness of breath.
- Dizziness or fainting.
- Swelling of feet or hands.
- Pain in the abdomen or bloating.
- Constant cough.
- Bleeding or bruising easily.

Personal Information

Specialist: _____

Phone #: _____

Family Doctor: _____

Phone #: _____

Appointments!

Who: _____

Who: _____

When: _____

When: _____

Where: _____

Where: _____

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