Care Gram
Heart Failure

What Is Heart Failure?
Heart failure means the heart may not be pumping blood through the body like it should. This may cause your body to retain fluid. You may feel short of breath and extra tired. There are many forms of heart disease that can cause heart failure. Ask your doctor to talk to you about your heart failure.

Managing Heart Failure

1. **Keep your follow-up appointments**
   - You should have an appointment with your doctor within a week after leaving the Hospital.

2. **Take your medications**
   - By taking your medications, you can decrease the chance of a return visit to the Hospital for worsening heart failure symptoms.
   - Do not stop taking your medications without talking to your doctor.
   - The medications that you have been prescribed to protect your heart can sometimes have side effects, including lowering your blood pressure and pulse. If you are having side effects from your medications, call your doctor first before you stop taking it.
   - If you cannot afford your medications, Licking Memorial Hospital may be able to assist you.
   - Talk to your doctor before you run out of medication.

3. **Weigh yourself**
   - You should weigh yourself every morning after using the bathroom.
   - Do it before taking a bath or shower and eating breakfast.
   - Use the same scale and wear the same amount of clothes each time.
   - Write down your daily weight on the calendar

4. **Limit your table salt and sodium intake**
   - Salt increases your chances of holding water – this makes your heart pump harder and can cause your body to hold more fluid.
   - Learn to read food labels on all food and drink items.
     – Limit your sodium intake to 2000 mg a day
     – Limit salted snack foods, canned vegetables and soups, luncheon meats, cheeses, and pickles
   - If you need help with your diet, ask your doctor to refer you to a dietitian.

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5. **Control your meal portions**
   - Portion control helps keep sodium and weight in check.

6. **Fluids**
   - Check with your doctor about daily fluid intake – some patients with heart failure may need to limit daily fluid intake.

7. **Stop smoking**
   - Your risk of having a heart attack can be reduced by 50 percent in one year if you quit smoking. Heart attacks are one of the major causes of heart failure. Some helpful hints to quit smoking include:
     - Set a target date to quit within the next 2 weeks
     - Find a support person to be there for you
     - Ask your doctor if you are a candidate for patches, medication, or smoking cessation classes
   - Remind yourself that smoking will decrease your life expectancy and increase your chances of early death. You will feel better too, once you have been able to stop smoking for good.

8. **Activity**
   - You can begin to return to your normal level of activity, as tolerated. Call your doctor if you feel more short of breath or tired.

Prevention
Follow all the instructions from your doctor and other healthcare providers. Always call your doctor with any concerns. The goal is to treat and keep your symptoms under control.

When to Call the Doctor – An Action Plan
When you call the office, tell the nurse or receptionist that you are a heart failure patient, and describe the symptoms that you are experiencing. Your nurse will speak with the doctor about your symptoms. The doctor will decide if you need to be examined or make recommended changes to help relieve your symptoms. For additional support, you can call the LMH Heart Failure Clinic at (220) 564-7760 to answer any questions.

Call the doctor's office if you have:
- A weight gain of 2 pounds in a day or 3 to 5 pounds in one week
- Increased shortness of breath
  - You may notice that you have increased shortness of breath with activity during the day and shortness of breath at night or while lying flat
- Increased swelling of your ankles, feet, or stomach
- Increased tiredness and weakness

Call 911 if you have:
- Trouble breathing that does not go away while sitting still
- Chest pain
- Cannot think clearly or feel confused
- Frothy sputum (a thick, foam-like substance that comes from you airway when you cough)