

# Living with Heart Failure: Monitoring Your Symptoms



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You play an active role in monitoring your health at home. It's important to track your condition carefully. This handout will help you learn about your body and the symptoms that tell you if your heart failure is getting worse. You will be able to recognize problems before they become too serious and avoid a hospital stay.

## **How do I monitor my health at home?**

Heart failure requires you and your caregiver to pay close attention to any changes in your symptoms. Follow these steps below to help notice changes in symptoms early and manage them better.

### **1. You will need to perform the following symptom checks daily**

- **Weigh yourself every day.**  
Follow these steps below to get the most accurate weight possible:
  - Weigh yourself at the same time each morning: after you urinate but before you eat or drink.
  - Use the same scale every day. Place the scale on a hard, flat surface without carpet.
  - Weigh yourself with no clothing or wear the same amount of clothing each time.

- Do not wear shoes.
- Record your weight on your log, calendar or phone app each day.
- Tell your doctor if your weight increases by 2 or more pounds in one day or 4 pounds in a week.
- **Ask yourself the following questions:**
  - Is my energy level normal?
  - Am I having shortness of breath more often when I am doing my everyday activities?
  - Am I having shortness of breath at night?
  - Are my clothes or shoes feeling tight?
  - Are my ankles, feet, legs or belly (abdomen) swollen?
  - Am I coughing more often?
- **Check the Heart Failure Action Plan to see what Zone you are in.**
- **Check your blood pressure and pulse in the morning, if directed by your provider.**

## **Heart Failure Action Plan: When to Call Your Doctor or Nurse**

When you are living with heart failure, it can be really hard to know when to call your doctor. The heart failure action plan on the following page provides clear instructions about when and who to call for you and your caregivers. If any new signs or symptoms develop, reference the plan below and call the numbers provided.



# Heart Failure Action Plan

**Do not guess. Call your doctor if you have any questions about this plan.**

<b>Green Zone: Doing Well</b>	<p><b>Your goal weight is:</b> <input style="width: 300px; height: 20px;" type="text"/></p> <p>You are in the <b>Green Zone</b> if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You have no shortness of breath, no swelling, no weight gain, no chest pain, or no decrease in your ability to maintain your activity level</li> </ul> <p>The <b>Green Zone</b> means that your symptoms are under control and you should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue taking your medications as ordered</li> <li>• Continue weighing yourself daily</li> <li>• Follow your 2-gram sodium diet and fluid restrictions</li> <li>• Keep all your doctor and blood draw appointments</li> </ul>
<b>Yellow Zone: Caution Call Your Doctor</b>	<p>You are in the <b>Yellow Zone</b> if you have any of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weight gain: 2 pounds or more in a day, or 4 pounds or more in one week</li> <li>• Cough</li> <li>• Shortness of breath with activity</li> <li>• Decrease in urine output</li> <li>• Change in your appetite (you are eating less but not losing weight)</li> <li>• Worsening tiredness</li> <li>• Increased swelling in your ankles, feet or abdomen</li> <li>• Trouble breathing when lying flat (need to sit in chair or use more pillows to sleep)</li> </ul> <p><b>How to call?</b>          Mon-Fri: 8:00am to 5:00pm call <b>(888) 287-1082</b>.          After 5:00pm, on weekends or holidays call: <b>(734) 936-6267</b> and ask the operator to page your heart doctor.</p>
<b>Red Zone: Call 911</b>	<p><b>Call 911 immediately if you have any of the following:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chest tightness at rest</li> <li>• Unrelieved chest pain (if no nitroglycerin prescription)</li> <li>• Unrelieved chest pain after taking a total of 3 nitroglycerin tabs/sprays</li> <li>• Wheezing</li> <li>• Confusion</li> <li>• Fainting spell</li> <li>• Shortness of breath when you are at rest</li> </ul>

## What do I do if I have other questions or concerns?

Call the Frankel Cardiovascular Call Center at (888) 287-1082 between 8am-5pm Monday through Friday.

You can also use the [MyUofMHealth.org](https://myUofMHealth.org) secure patient portal to communicate with your care team about non-urgent matters. This tool allows you to:

- Request an appointment, view and cancel appointments, or self-schedule an appointment with an established provider
- Receive laboratory and other test results
- Send non-urgent message to your care team (avoid phone tag!)
- Review prescription medications and request prescription renewals

If you need further assistance, you may email the Health Information Management department at [HIM-PatientPortal@med.umich.edu](mailto:HIM-PatientPortal@med.umich.edu), or you can call (734) 615-0872 Monday-Friday 7:30 am -4:00 pm.

## 2. You will need to record your symptom checks daily

Be sure to record the results of your home symptom checks (see log sheet on page 5 of this section) so you can easily share them with your health care team. You may prefer to use your own method such as a notebook, calendar, or phone app. Look for the free *HF Path* app from the American Heart Association on the Google Play App Store (for Android phones) or the iTunes App Store (for iPhones). You can use it to track your weight and symptoms.

A nurse clinical care coordinator will go over your self-check results with you during routine phone calls and at your clinic visits.

**Use this daily log to monitor your heart failure symptoms:**

- Mark the month you are monitoring
- Fill in the day of the month (in the left column)
- Record your symptoms for each day of the month

Symptom self-check log: record your findings below								
Month _____								
Record pulse and blood pressure if directed by your provider								
Date	Weight	Change in your breathing	Swelling	Fatigue	Change in appetite	Heart Failure Zone	Pulse	Blood Pressure
<i>(Example)</i> 12/01/20	150 <del>lbs</del>	No	Yes, ankles	Yes	Yes	Yellow	80	110/70

Extra copies of this Symptom Monitoring Log can be printed from the *Michigan Medicine Care Guides from Your Clinician* site:

<https://careguides.med.umich.edu/heart-failure>

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