



## Steps to Avoid Heart Failure Admissions

Nearly 5 million Americans have heart failure and it is estimated over 400,000 new cases will be found in the next year. Heart failure is responsible for more hospitalizations than all forms of cancer combined.

In the Heart Failure Program, we look at any heart failure admissions to see if we can find the cause of the admission. Here are the three main causes we found:

### 1) Not knowing what signs or symptoms to be aware of:

Know your body and pay attention if there is a change in how you are feeling. The easiest way is to weigh daily first thing in the morning. Increased



Connie Wessels, R.N. M.S.N.

weight gain of 2-3 lbs in a day or 3-5 lbs in a week could be the first sign of beginning heart failure. Also, notice if you have increased difficulty breathing in your usual activities. Look to see if you have swelling to feet, ankles, legs, stomach. Check to see if your appetite is decreased. This could mean swelling of fluid in your stomach decreasing your desire to eat.

### 2) Limit your sodium (salt) intake to 2,000 mg daily.

Look for hidden salt. The more the food is easily prepared and stored, usually the higher the sodium. Be willing to let people know you are to limit your sodium to 2,000 mg a day. If you eat salty foods, you may notice you want to drink more liquids. Sodium (salt) will cause you to hold fluid more even if you don't drink more liquids. This makes your heart work harder as it pushes extra blood around the body.

### 3) Medication issues.

Missing doses, taking the medication off schedule, using over-the-counter medications and natural supplements can make a difference in how your heart medicines help you stay healthy. If you are having any problems with your medications, please let your health care provider know. Please bring your medicines to your doctor appointments.

## Summer and Heart Failure



Greg Paulsen, M.D.

Extreme temperatures pose special problems to patients with heart failure. When temperatures and humidity are high, the body has to work harder to cool off. This additional

workload can stress an already damaged heart. Symptoms that are likely to occur are an increase in weight or edema, increased shortness of breath, or decrease in exercise tolerance.

Humidity can also present problems. One of the ways humans lose heat is by perspiring. Water (perspiration) cools our bodies when

it evaporates. If it is hot but dry, the perspiration evaporates quickly and cools efficiently. When it is hot and humid, the air is already saturated with water and perspiration evaporates more slowly, resulting in less efficient cooling.

One of the more serious health events that can occur during periods of high temperatures is heat exhaustion and heat stroke. When the body can't keep up with its cooling needs, the core temperature can rise. Symptoms of heat exhaustion are excess fatigue and lethargy, weakness, dizziness, nausea, muscle aches, headache, and profuse sweating (core body temp is less than

103F.) If the body temperature continues to rise (greater than 105F) patients may stop sweating, become confused and disoriented, and progress to coma and possible death (heat stroke).

Patients should take precautions to avoid the heat of the day, and stay in air conditioning when possible. Most weather stations and web sites will report heat indexes, which can be helpful in planning outings. The heat index combines air temperature and relative humidity to determine the human perceived equivalent temperature.

Commonly, patients will notice an increase in lower extremity swelling during hot periods of weather and during the summer. One way our bodies lose excess heat is a process called vasodilation. The peripheral vascular bed dilates to increase flow to the skin and extremities to dissipate heat. This can result in increased

leaking of fluid into the most dependent portions of the body; usually the feet and legs.

As a result of this vasodilation, the blood pressure can sometimes drop from its usual levels to lower levels that can lead patients to feel lightheaded or faint, especially with rapid position changes.

Summer is also the season for fresh garden produce, and the temptation to salt that deliciously buttered fresh corn on the cob. These salt indiscretions are another common cause for edema and fluid overload.

By being prudent, following guidelines, and planning ahead, the summertime living can still be easy.

### Effects of the heat index (shade values)

80–90 °F	Caution – fatigue is possible with prolonged exposure and activity. Continuing activity could result in heat cramps
90–105 °F	Extreme caution – heat cramps, and heat exhaustion are possible. Continuing activity could result in heat stroke
105–130 °F	Danger – heat cramps, and heat exhaustion are likely; heat stroke is probable with continued activity
over 130 °F	Extreme danger – heat stroke is imminent
Note that exposure to full sunshine can increase heat index values by up to 15 °F	

## Balance Tips and Fall Prevention

The next several months can be busy with lots of activities and events to attend, as well as many family and friends to visit. Keep yourself active and safe by following these tips for preventing falls.

### General Tips:

- Wear shoes with low or flat heels
- Make sure that where you are walking is free of rugs or cords to avoid getting tangled up.
- Hold someone's arm or use a device when walking on sand, grass or plush carpet
- When standing, keep your feet in a comfortable apart position
- When sitting, be aware of the feel of your feet on the floor
- Use handrails when you can
- When waking up in the morning, get up slowly and sit on the side of the bed before standing
- Get a bathmat for the shower to get better traction on the slippery surface

If you are having company or just want to make your home safe follow these tips to make your home more fall proof.



*Morgan Sayler, PharmD*

## The Importance of Potassium for People with Heart Failure

Potassium is a mineral that helps maintain the normal function of the heart and nervous system.

Some people with heart failure need to eat foods high in potassium. Diuretics (water pills) or other medications commonly prescribed for heart failure patients to get rid of excess fluid can cause potassium loss. Research has shown that a diet high in potassium may help lower blood pressure as well.



*Mary Hampton R.D.  
L.D. C.N.S.D.*

But people who have kidney problems or take certain other medications may risk having potassium build up in their systems. And too much potassium can be just as harmful as too little. Ask your doctor if a high potassium diet is appropriate for you.

The recommended daily intake of potassium for an adult is 4700 mg per day. Potassium-rich foods – which you may need to eat more of include:

- Baked potato: 1081 mg
- Banana: 594 mg
- 1 cup Spinach: 839 mg
- 1 cup Lima beans: 955 mg
- 1 cup yogurt or skim milk: 579 mg
- Fresh orange; : 237 mg
- 1 cup Canned low sodium tomato product: 909 mg
- 1 cup Cantaloupe: 494 mg
- 1 cup Dried Prunes: 1089 mg
- 1 cup winter squash: 898 mg

### Lean and Meaty Spaghetti Sauce

#### Ingredients:

- 1 pound extra lean ground beef
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- ½ cup fresh onions
- 1- 5 oz can of low Sodium tomato sauce
- 1-14 ½ oz can of no salt added diced tomatoes
- 1 tsp Italian seasoning
- 1 tsp dried basil

Brown ground beef with onions and garlic until completely browned with medium heat. Add diced tomatoes and tomato sauce. Simmer 10-15 minutes. Add seasonings in the last few minutes of cooking.

*Nutrition information: Yield 6 servings: calories 184, Carbohydrate 8 g, 105 mg sodium, 733 mg potassium*

*Recipe from The Dash Diet Action Plan by Marla Heller, MS, RD.*

### Heart Failure Education & Support Group

**Wednesday, August 12  
2:00 – 3:30 p.m.**

Registration at 1:45

Mercy Cafeteria Conference Rms 1A & 1B

**Call 584-3232 to register**

Family and friends are invited to attend.