



My Doctor Visits— How Can I Get Ready?

Prepare before you go to your doctor's office. Check off the statements that apply to you and discuss with your doctor.

Since my last visit:

I have not taken my medicine(s) as directed every day.

My medicines have caused side effects that bother me.

My symptoms have changed (better or worse).

I have lost sleep due to my heart failure symptoms.

I have noticed a sudden weight gain.

I have felt "sad" or "hopeless" much of the time.

I have made progress on my heart failure goals.

Building heart-healthy habits for exercise and diet



Make changes one step at a time

When you have heart disease, or are at risk for it, it can mean making some changes. Where do you start? You can start by taking a single step. With practice each day, you may find that your heart-healthy *change* has become a heart-healthy *habit*. **Read the tips below.** Check off 1 or more to try.

Tips for being more active

Aim for 30 minutes of being active each day. Start with 10 minutes and work up to 30 minutes. Before starting any exercise activity, talk with your doctor about physical activity that is safe and right for you.

If you often . . .

Read a magazine during your lunch break
Search for the parking space closest to the mall
Take the elevator
Sit at the kitchen table and talk with a friend

Try this instead . . .

<input type="checkbox"/> Take a walk
<input type="checkbox"/> Choose a parking space far away from the entrance
<input type="checkbox"/> Take the stairs
<input type="checkbox"/> Take a walk with your friend

Tips for healthy eating

Try to eat foods that are low in salt. Eat fresh fruits and vegetables as part of your meals and snacks.

If you usually . . .

Eat a cookie for dessert
Deep-fry your chicken
Use salt to season your food
Drink regular soda
Drink whole milk
Eat everything on your plate in a restaurant

Try this instead . . .

<input type="checkbox"/> Eat an apple
<input type="checkbox"/> Grill or broil your chicken
<input type="checkbox"/> Season your food with herbs, spices, or lemon
<input type="checkbox"/> Drink water or seltzer
<input type="checkbox"/> Drink low-fat or fat-free milk
<input type="checkbox"/> Cut your portion in half. Take the rest home

Talk to your doctor about making heart-healthy changes.

Getting the most from your medicine



Taking your medicine as your doctor tells you helps you get the most from your treatment.

Staying safe with medicine

Here is what you need to know about taking your medicine safely.

- **Fill all your prescriptions at the same pharmacy.** Then all your records will be in one place, which lowers the risk for taking medicines that might not be safe to take together
- **Do not crush or split tablets**
- **Tell your doctor about how your medicine makes you feel**
- **Do not stop any medicine without talking with your doctor.** Some medicines have to be stopped slowly

Talk to your doctor or pharmacist about any questions you have about your medicines.

Taking your medicines as directed

It is not always easy to take your medicines exactly as directed. How are you doing? Check off the boxes below that describe you.

- I sometimes forget a dose.
- I often forget to take my medicine.
- I have trouble paying for my medicine.
- I am bothered by the side effects of my medicine.
- I am not sure how my medicine helps me.
- I take every dose, every day, just as directed.

Take this list to your doctor. Tell your doctor about any problems you are having. He or she can make your plan easier for you.

Tips for taking your medicine on time

- **Make a calendar.** Write down the medicines you need to take, when to take them, and when to refill your prescriptions
- **Use a pill box.** Fill it once a week with all of your medicines
- **Wear a watch with an alarm.** Set it to go off when you need to take your next dose
- **Ask someone to be your “medicine buddy.”** Ask a friend or family member to remind you to take your medicine

Your heart failure medicines: *What you need to know*



Your heart failure medicines help your heart in many ways

Medicines are a very important part of your heart failure treatment. This guide can help you learn more. It is *not* meant to replace the advice of your doctor. If you have questions or concerns about your medicines or how they make you feel, always talk with your doctor about them.

Keep taking your medicines even when you are feeling better. If you need to stop a medicine, always talk with your doctor first. Many heart failure medicines should not be stopped all at once. Your doctor can work with you to reduce your dose slowly.

Facts about heart failure medicines

Each one works in a different way

You may take one or more medicines every day. Your doctor may prescribe medicine to:

- Help your heart work better
- Help you breathe more easily
- Help you get rid of extra fluid
- Help you feel better
- Help you stay out of the hospital
- Help you live longer

How the medicines may make you feel

Some medicines for heart failure may affect the way you feel. At each doctor visit, be sure to let your doctor know how each medicine makes you feel. You and your doctor can decide what medicines are best for you and how to manage any side effects.

Talk with your doctor about your medicine

Ask these questions so you know how to take your medicine the right way.

1. What is the name of the medicine?
2. How will this medicine help me?
3. At what time of day should I take this medicine?
4. Should I take it with food or without?
5. What should I do if I miss a dose?
6. Are there any other medicines that I should not take with this medicine?

Getting the most from your doctor visits



Here are some hints to help you get the most out of each doctor visit.

Write down your questions

Before a doctor visit, write down questions for your doctor. Bring the list with you to your visit. Take notes about what you discuss. Also, think about bringing someone with you to your visit. This person can help you ask questions or take notes.

Discuss your treatment plan

Your treatment plan includes all of the things you need to do to take care of your heart health. This includes your plan for diet and fitness. This plan may include taking medicines for heart problems. You may also take medicines for other health problems, such as diabetes. It is a good idea to talk with your doctor about your treatment plan at every visit.

Be open and honest with your doctor

Talk with your doctor about the medicines you take and how you take them. Let the doctor know what you eat and how active you are. It may help to write these things down first. Then, share your notes with the doctor. Tell your doctor about any concerns you have with your current treatment plan.

During your doctor visit, go over your treatment plan and ask any questions you may have.

Review your medicines as part of your doctor visit

Bring all your medicines in a bag to the doctor's office, including:

- Prescription medicines
- Over-the-counter medicines (such as anything you take for pain, sleep, colds, or headaches)
- Vitamins and nutritional supplements
- Herbal medicines
- Eye drops
- Inhalers (medicines you use for asthma or allergies)

For each medicine, talk with your doctor and take notes about:

- Why you take it
- When you take it
- How you take it (for example, with meals or on an empty stomach)
- How it may make you feel
- Whether it is OK to take it with your other medicines, including medicines you take for pain, colds, headaches, and more
- Any trouble you are having with taking it as directed

It's never too late to stop smoking



Stopping smoking – stepping forward

Deciding to stop smoking is one of the best choices you will ever make. Know that it is never too late to quit. People who quit smoking may live longer. This is true even for people who quit later in life.

To get support to stop smoking, contact these organizations.

American Heart Association
800-242-8721
www.americanheart.org

American Lung Association
800-586-4872
To speak with a lung health professional,
call 800-548-8252.
www.lungusa.org

Tips for stopping smoking

- Write down why you want to quit.** You might list “Having more energy” or “Living longer”
- Set a quit date.** Choose a low-stress time to quit
- Ask your doctor about treatments that can help you stop smoking.** These can help stop the urge to smoke
- Find things to replace smoking.** Sugarless gum or candy can keep your mouth busy
- Be active during the day.** Being active can help lessen the stress of quitting
- Relax before bedtime.** Try taking a hot bath and drinking hot, noncaffeinated herbal tea or milk just before bedtime
- Get help from others.** Ask your doctor or area hospital about local support groups. For online support, check out *Freedom From Smoking*® on the American Lung Association Web site (see listing above). And ask those close to you for support as you are quitting
- Stick with it!** Most smokers have to “practice” quitting several times before they stop for good

Talk with your doctor about ways to stop smoking.

For Women Only

Recommendations	Date Completed and Results	Action Needed
Breast Self-exam¹⁰ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Starting at age 20, check your breasts for lumps, dimpling, or discharge <i>See your healthcare provider if you're not sure about anything you find</i>	Do every month	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mammogram¹⁰ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Every year starting at age 40 <i>Earlier if you are at higher risk for breast cancer</i> <i>Speak with your healthcare provider to see if you are at higher risk</i>	Date of last mammogram: _____ Results: _____	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pelvic Exam With Pap Test¹⁰ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Three years after you start having vaginal intercourse or no later than age 21 Every 1 to 3 years as directed by your healthcare provider 	Date of last exam with Pap test: _____ Results: _____	<input type="checkbox"/>

For Men Only

Recommendations	Date Completed and Results	Action Needed
Prostate Cancer Screening¹⁰ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Every year starting at age 50 <i>Earlier if you are at higher risk for prostate cancer</i> <i>Speak with your healthcare provider to see if you are at higher risk</i>	Date of last exam: _____ Results: _____	<input type="checkbox"/>
Testicular Self-exam¹¹ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Optional, but once a month if you have risk factors <i>Ask your healthcare provider if you have risk factors</i> <i>See your healthcare provider if you're not sure about anything you find</i>	Do every month	<input type="checkbox"/>

References: 1. American Heart Association. Blood pressure testing and measurement. Available at: <http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=4470>. Accessed September 21, 2006. 2. American Heart Association. Get your cholesterol checked. Available at: <http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=541>. Accessed September 21, 2006. 3. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, US Department of Health and Human Services. Pocket guide to good health for adults: 3. Checkups, tests, and shots. Available at: <http://www.ahrq.gov/ppip/adguide/checkups.htm>. Accessed September 28, 2006. 4. American Cancer Society. Colorectal cancer: early detection. Available at: http://www.cancer.org/docroot/CRI/content/CRI_2_6X_Colorectal_Cancer_Early_Detection_10.asp. Accessed September 21, 2006. 5. American Academy of Ophthalmology. Information from your eye M.D.: when should you see an eye M.D. Available at: www.aao.org/patients/eyemd/statement.cfm. Accessed November 14, 2006. 6. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Recommended adult immunization schedule. United States, October 2006-September 2007. Available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/nip/recs/adult-schedule.pdf>. Accessed November 14, 2006. 7. American Cancer Society. How do I protect myself from UV? Available at: http://www.cancer.org/docroot/PED/content/ped_7_1x_Protect_Your_Skin_From_UV.asp?sitearea=&level=. Accessed September 25, 2006. 8. Colgate World of Care. Dental visits—the dentist visit and what to expect. Available at: <http://www.colgate.com/app/Colgate/US/OC/Information/OralHealthBasics/CheckupsDentalVisit/WhatToExpect.cvsp>. Accessed September 21, 2006. 9. American Dental Association. Oral health topics A-Z: cleaning your teeth and gums (oral hygiene). Available at: <http://www.ada.org/public/topics/cleaning.asp>. Accessed September 21, 2006. 10. American Cancer Society. American Cancer Society guidelines for the early detection of cancer. Available at: http://www.cancer.org/docroot/PED/content/PED_2_3X_ACS_Cancer_Detection_Guidelines_36.asp. Accessed September 25, 2006. 11. American Cancer Society. Can testicular cancer be found early? Available at: http://www.cancer.org/docroot/cr/content/cr_2_4_3x_Can_Testicular_Cancer_Be_Found_Early_41.asp. Accessed September 25, 2006.