

Patient Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Greenhouse Internists, PC

Date of Birth: \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_

## Limiting Sodium and Fluids with Heart Failure: After Your Visit

Sodium causes your body to keep extra water, making it harder for your heart to pump. By limiting sodium, you will feel better and lower your risk of having to go to the hospital.

People get most of their sodium from processed foods. Fast food and restaurant meals also tend to be very high in sodium. Your doctor may suggest that you limit sodium to 2,000 milligrams (mg) a day or less. That is less than 1 teaspoon of salt a day, including all the salt you eat in cooked or packaged foods.

Usually, you have to limit the amount of liquids you drink only if your heart failure is severe. Limiting sodium alone often is enough to help your body get rid of extra fluids. However, your doctor may tell you to limit your fluid intake to a set amount each day.

**Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety.** Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

### How can you care for yourself at home?

#### Read food labels

- Read food labels on cans and food packages. The labels tell you how much sodium is in each serving. Make sure that you look at the serving size. If you eat more than the serving size, you have eaten more sodium than is listed for one serving.
- Food labels also tell you the Percent Daily Value. If the Percent Daily Value says 50%, it means that you will get at least 50% of all the sodium you need for the entire day in one serving. Choose products with low Percent Daily Values for sodium.
- Be aware that sodium can come in forms other than salt, including monosodium glutamate (MSG), sodium citrate, and sodium bicarbonate (baking soda). MSG is often added to Asian food. You can sometimes ask for food without MSG or salt.

#### Buy low-sodium foods

- Buy foods that are labeled "unsalted" (no salt added), "sodium-free" (less than 5 mg of sodium per serving), or "low-sodium" (less than 140 mg of sodium per serving). A food labeled "light sodium" has less than half of the full-sodium version of that food. Foods labeled "reduced-sodium" may still have too much sodium.
- Buy fresh vegetables or plain, frozen vegetables. Buy low-sodium versions of canned vegetables, soups, and other canned goods.

#### Prepare low-sodium meals

- Use less salt each day when cooking. Reducing salt in this way will help you adjust to the taste. Do not add salt after cooking. Take the salt shaker off the table.
- Flavor your food with garlic, lemon juice, onion, vinegar, herbs, and spices instead of salt. Do not use soy sauce, steak sauce, onion salt, garlic salt, mustard, or ketchup on your food.
- Make your own salad dressings, sauces, and ketchup without adding salt.
- Use less salt (or none) when recipes call for it. You can often use half the salt a recipe calls for without losing flavor. Other dishes like rice, pasta, and grains do not need added salt.
- Rinse canned vegetables. This removes some—but not all—of the salt.

- Avoid water that has a naturally high sodium content or that has been treated with water softeners, which add sodium. Call your local water company to find out the sodium content of your water supply. If you buy bottled water, read the label and choose a sodium-free brand.

Avoid high-sodium foods, such as:

- Smoked, cured, salted, and canned meat, fish, and poultry.
- Ham, bacon, hot dogs, and luncheon meats.
- Regular, hard, and processed cheese and regular peanut butter.
- Crackers with salted tops.
- Frozen prepared meals.
- Canned and dried soups, broths, and bouillon, unless labeled sodium-free or low-sodium.
- Canned vegetables, unless labeled sodium-free or low-sodium.
- Salted snack foods such as chips and pretzels.
- French fries, pizza, tacos, and other fast foods.
- Pickles, olives, ketchup, and other condiments, especially soy sauce, unless labeled sodium-free or low-sodium.

#### **If you cannot cook for yourself**

- Have family members or friends help you, or have someone cook low-sodium meals.
- Check with your local senior nutrition program to find out where meals are served and whether they offer a low-sodium option. You can often find these programs through your local health department or hospital.
- Have meals delivered to your home. Most cities have a Meals on Wheels program. These programs provide one hot meal a day for older adults, delivered to their homes. Ask whether these meals are low-sodium. Let them know that you are on a low-sodium diet.

#### **Limiting fluid intake**

- Find a method that works for you. You might simply write down how much you drink every time you do. Some people keep a container filled with the amount of fluid allowed for that day. If they drink from a source other than the container, then they pour out that amount.
- Measure your regular drinking glasses to find out how much fluid each one holds. Once you know this, you will not have to measure every time.
- Besides water, milk, juices, and other drinks, some foods have a lot of fluid. Count any foods that will melt (such as ice cream or gelatin dessert) or liquid foods (such as soup) as part of your fluid intake for the day.