

Heart Failure: Learn to Recognize Symptoms

With heart failure, small changes in how you feel each day can mean a lot.

Watching when and how your symptoms change can help you manage and understand your heart failure better.

And that can help you stay out of the hospital.

So it's important to pay attention to these small changes.

To help with this, let's practice recognizing these changes and what they could mean.

Now, think back on the past few days.

Let's start with weight gain.

Maybe you had dinner at a restaurant, or maybe you had take-out food.

And the next morning, when you weighed yourself, you noticed that your weight was a little higher than it was yesterday.

Here's the deal with a change in weight— it could mean your body is holding onto fluids.

This can happen if you eat out or have other high-sodium foods.

This is just something to watch out for.

Now let's think about how you're breathing.

Can you tell that sometimes you may be more short of breath?

Maybe you've had to prop yourself up with pillows to breathe at night.

Tracking how you're breathing can let you know how you're doing.

And changes in how you're breathing may be something to talk to your doctor about.

Now let's think about how you're feeling in general.

Are you able to do the things you enjoy, such as getting out for a walk?

Or have you noticed that you're more tired lately, and it just doesn't seem like it's worth the effort?

Small changes like these can add up.

But with care and practice, you may catch changes that could mean your heart failure symptoms are getting worse.

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Taking just a little time every day to think about and write down how you're feeling can help you see what your symptoms might be trying to tell you.

Examples to watch for and talk to your doctor about include having new or increased shortness of breath; feeling more tired than usual; increased swelling in your legs, ankles, or feet; or needing extra pillows to prop yourself up at night to sleep.

So keep practicing and tracking how you feel every day.

Your heart failure action plan will help you know more about your health.

And you'll know what to do if your symptoms change.

Remember, you know yourself best.

But if you have any questions or concerns, you can always talk to your doctor.