



Management of Congestive Heart Failure Patient Action Guide

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About this Guide/Table of Contents



This action guide is intended to help patients with congestive heart failure, or CHF, learn about a new device to help monitor the symptoms of heart failure and a new treatment option. It is as a companion document to the ICER report, *[CardioMEMS HF System™ \(St Jude Medical\) and Sacubitril/Valsartan \(Entresto™, Novartis\) for Management of Congestive Heart Failure](#)*. All accompanying materials are available on the [CTAF website](#).

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About Congestive Heart Failure

What is congestive heart failure? Congestive heart failure, or CHF, is a condition where fluid builds up in the body when the heart cannot fill up or pump out blood properly. Many health conditions can cause congestive heart failure, such as high blood pressure, diabetes, and heart disease. Doctors treat heart failure by treating the condition that caused it. They may also recommend lifestyle changes such as changing diet, increasing exercise, and stopping smoking.

Patients with CHF are categorized into two groups, based on how much blood the heart can pump. A healthy heart can push between 55% and 75% of the blood it contains through the left ventricle. The percentage of blood that your heart pumps through its left ventricle is called “ejection fraction.” Some patients’ hearts can still pump normal amounts of blood, but other patients’ hearts may only be able pump 40% or less of the blood they contain, and this condition is called “reduced ejection fraction.”

How many Americans have CHF? In the United States, one in 50 people have heart failure. This means that there are more than 6 million Americans who have heart failure, which is a leading cause of death and disability.*

The resources at right explain the causes of heart failure and common treatments your doctor might prescribe.

General Resources	
What is Heart Failure , American Heart Association (AHA)	Two-page informational brochure explaining CHF, its causes, and steps individuals can take to manage CHF.
Causes of Heart Failure , AHA	Information about conditions that can lead to heart failure.
How is Heart Failure Diagnosed , National Institutes of Health (NIH), National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute	Guide for patients on how doctors diagnose CHF, including information on common diagnostic tests.
Ejection Fraction , Cleveland Clinic	Explanation of ejection fraction, how it relates to heart failure, and why it is important for CHF patients to know their ejection fraction.
Heart Disease Risk Predictor , University of California, San Francisco	Tool that patients without heart disease can use to predict the risk of developing heart disease.
Heart Failure Medications , Heart Failure Society of America	Information on commonly-prescribed medications for heart failure, common side-effects, and how to manage side effects.
“ACE Inhibitors” and “ARBs” To Protect Your Heart? A Guide To Patients Being Treated for Stable Coronary Heart Disease , Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality	Information for patients who take ACE inhibitors and ARBs, two commonly prescribed drugs for individuals with heart failure.

* Mozaffarian D, Benjamin EJ, Go AS, et al. Heart disease and stroke statistics--2015 update: A report from the American Heart Association. *Circulation*. 2015;131(4):e29-322.

Care Resources

The resources at right provide information on how to manage heart failure and its causes. Included are workbooks, sample questions to ask a doctor, and information on how to pay for care.

Managing CHF	
Self-care Guide for the Heart Failure Patient , American Heart Association (AHA)	Brief guide to help patients with heart failure understand their condition, modify diet and lifestyle, and learn about medications that doctors may prescribe.
How Can I Make My Lifestyle Healthier? , AHA	Information on how patients can modify their lifestyle to promote healthier habits, including tips to stop smoking, manage blood pressure, increase physical activity, and improve diet.
Why Should I Limit Sodium? , AHA	Information about the risks of eating salt, foods to avoid, and tips on how to cook with less salt.
Understanding and Managing High Blood Pressure , AHA / American Stroke Association (ASA)	Interactive guide that explains the causes of high blood pressure, common ways doctors manage the condition, and tips for living with high blood pressure.
Caregiver Home Page , AHA	Resources to help caregivers of patients with heart failure. Includes resources on diet, physical activity, support networks, and more.

Tools	
Self-Check Plan for HF Management , AHA	A short checklist of symptoms to help patients with heart failure decide whether to contact their doctor.
My Heart Health Plan , American College of Cardiology (ACC)	Personalized workbook to help patients manage their heart failure through lifestyle changes and medication.
Questions to Ask Your Doctor , ACC	Interactive list of questions to bring to doctors visits.

Paying for Care	
Health Care Costs Support , ACC	Information on patient assistance programs, affordable health insurance, and patient navigators for individuals with CHF.

New CHF Management Option: CardioMEMS



What is CardioMEMS? CardioMEMS is a device that monitors blood pressure and is implanted into the pulmonary artery. Some studies have shown that pulmonary artery blood pressure may increase in the days and weeks before symptoms of worsening CHF appear. The CardioMEMS device transmits information to doctors that may help them adjust treatment to reduce the risk of hospitalization for worsening CHF.



Benefits: Available research shows that for some patients, CardioMEMS can reduce the number and length of hospitalizations. There is no evidence yet on whether CardioMEMS reduces the risk of death from CHF.



Risks: CardioMEMS is implanted through a minor cut in the upper thigh, and then moved by a catheter to the correct position in the pulmonary artery. There are risks associated with this, and any procedure, but in clinical trials there were very few problems reported when patients had the device implanted.



Costs: Most insurers do not currently cover CardioMEMS. For most Medicare patients, the device is covered but Medicare only pays for a portion of the total cost.



Who: CardioMEMS may benefit patients whose disease places moderate limitations on their physical activities and who need close monitoring in order to make treatment adjustments that can keep their condition stable.

New CHF Treatment Option: Entresto



What is Entresto? Entresto is a combination of a drug to lower blood pressure (valsartan) and another drug to help properly maintain fluid balance in the body. It is prescribed for patients with reduced ejection fraction (meaning the heart pumps a lower than normal volume of blood with each contraction).



Benefits: Available research shows that, in appropriate patients, Entresto may be able to slow the progression of heart failure, reduce trips to the hospital related to CHF, and extend life more than older therapies.



Risks: Entresto is still a new drug, so information on risks is limited. In clinical trials, the risks of taking Entresto were lower than or similar to the risks of taking ACE inhibitors or ARBs, two older treatments.



Costs: Entresto is more expensive than older therapies. This may mean that your copay for this drug will be higher at the pharmacy.



Who: Entresto is approved for patients with reduced ejection fraction and heart failure that causes mild to severe limitations during normal daily activities.