



## **Congestive Heart Failure (CHF)**

UniCare Health Plan of West Virginia, Inc. (UniCare) has a care management program for Congestive Heart Failure (CHF). This program will help you better understand and manage your CHF. We can assist you to set health goals and create a care plan that fits your lifestyle. You do not have to join the program. You are enrolled as a member of UniCare.

## **Living with CHF**

It may be scary to learn that you or someone you love has heart failure. It does not mean the heart has stopped beating. CHF is a lasting health problem where your heart muscle becomes weaker. Most of the time, CHF can be treated.

We want you to know you can take control. You can take steps to help manage your condition and enjoy life. Simple steps like taking your medicines, eating healthy and exercising can make a real difference.

We will keep your doctor informed of your condition and the services we provide you. Your case manager can help you learn how to better manage your CHF.

### **Things to know:**

- When you have CHF your heart does not do a good job of pumping blood through your body, so it does other things to make up for it.
- Your body holds on to salt and water. Fluid starts to build up in your body. This causes swelling.
- You will have symptoms like feeling weak, tired and out of breath.
- Treatment can slow the disease and help you feel better.

### **Tips to monitor your CHF:**

- You can monitor your weight and extra body fluid (called edema).
  1. Weigh every day at the same time in the same kind of clothes.
  2. If you have gained weight in a short time, call your doctor right away. Your doctor will tell you when to call, depending on how much weight you gained and how fast you gained the weight.
  3. Make a daily log of your weight.
- Learn how to recognize signs that your CHF is getting worse. Here are some signs you may have:
  - Quick weight gain
  - Trouble breathing
  - Edema in the legs and feet and other parts of the body
  - Coughing or wheezing



- Feeling full or sick to your stomach
- Your doctor may want you to take your blood pressure at home. Your doctor or a nurse can show you how to take your blood pressure the right way.
- Work with your case manager to learn about home monitoring.
- Learn what your blood pressure reading means.
  1. Blood pressure readings have two numbers.
  2. The top number is called the Systolic, for example, the 120 in 120/80. It measures the pressure when the heart is pumping.
  3. The bottom number is called the Diastolic, for example, the 80 in 120/80. It measures the pressure when the heart is resting.
- Healthy adults should have a blood pressure of 120/80 or less.
- Hypertension or high blood pressure is 140/90 or higher.
- Talk with your doctor about when to call him or her and when you should go to the hospital.

### **How to take your CHF medications:**

- You may take medicines that lower your blood pressure or help your heart pump better. Medications are prescribed differently for each person. Your doctor will work with you to find the right medicine for you.
- If you do not take your medications the way your doctor says the medications may not work as well. It is best to take your medications about the same time every day.
- Don't take over-the-counter medicines including cold medicines and herbal supplements without talking to your doctor. They can prevent your medications from working the right way.
- Call your doctor if you think you are having side effects from your medication.
- We can help you know how to take your medications the right way.
- We can help you understand how your medications work.

### **Ways you can improve or manage your CHF:**

- Quit smoking. Quitting smoking can make a big improvement in controlling your CHF. We have programs, and there are medications that can help you in stopping smoking.
- Make short- and long-term goals. We can assist you to make healthy changes one small step at a time to improve your CHF.
- Lose weight if you are overweight. Even a few pounds can make a difference. We can help you make changes to your diet to fit your life.
- Talk with your doctor about how much salt or sodium should be in your diet.
- Get a flu shot every year. Ask your doctor if you should have the pneumonia vaccine.
- Limit alcohol. Ask your doctor how much, if any, alcohol is safe.



### **Support to help you manage your CHF:**

- We can help you talk to your family or caregiver about your CHF
- We can assist you in finding community programs and resources in your area
- Tips to talk with your doctor and get the most out of your visit:
  1. Ask any questions you may have about your CHF. You can write them down and take them with you to your visit.
  2. Follow your doctor's advice - if you have questions or concerns, let your doctor know.
  3. Make sure your doctor knows what medicines you are taking.

### **Important screenings:**

- Depression
- Other health conditions
- Preventive care screenings such as wellness checkups, mammograms and Pap tests

### **Other helpful information**

- [U.S. National Library of Medicine](#)
- [Medline Plus](#)
- [American Heart Association](#)
- [National Heart, Lung & Blood Institute](#)

#### Sources:

\* National Heart, Lung & Blood Institute

What is Artherosclerosis?

<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/health-topics/topics/atherosclerosis/>, accessed November 8, 2013.

\* American Heart Association [www.heart.org/HEARTORG/](http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/)

\* Publication: Your Guide to Lowering Blood Pressure

National Heart, Lung & Blood Institute

[http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/hbp/hbp\\_low/index.htm](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/hbp/hbp_low/index.htm), accessed November 8, 2013.

\*Healthfinder.gov

Use Medicines Safely

<http://www.healthfinder.gov/HealthTopics/Category/everyday-healthy-living/safety/use-medicines-safely>, accessed November 8, 2013.

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