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Healthy Nutrition

Tips from the Wright & Filippis Registered Dietitian

*When your heart doesn't pump normally, it is essential to reduce the work it has to do. Sodium causes the body to retain water. Everyone with heart failure is advised to reduce their sodium intake. You may also need to restrict fluids. **Ask your doctor how much sodium and fluid is right for you.***

Tips for Reducing Sodium Intake

- Do not add salt in cooking or at the table.
- Use sodium free (less than 5 mg/serving) or very low sodium (less than 35 mg/serving) condiments, salad dressings and seasonings.
- Check the sodium content of any food with a label. There are many ingredients besides table salt that contain sodium.
- Avoid foods from the grocery store deli or salad bar.
- Eat out less often and select plain, fresh-cooked foods that can be ordered without salt, seasoning blends, sauces or gravy.
- Avoid cured, processed, dried and smoked meats and fish, cheese and canned foods, unless labeled low-sodium (no more than 140 mg/serving).
- Use a low-sodium cookbook or find low-sodium recipes online.
- If you can't find a variety of low-sodium and sodium-free products locally, a large selection is available through internet-based companies.



Caution: Check with your doctor before using "salt-substitutes". They contain potassium. If you can't use them, check all "very low sodium" and "sodium free" processed foods to be sure they don't contain potassium chloride.



If You Must Limit Fluids

- Ask your doctor how much you can have in ounces or cups per day (1 cup = 8 ounces). Think of this as your daily bank account to "spend".
 - At the start of the day measure the allowed amount, as water, into a pitcher big enough to hold the entire amount.
 - When drinking water, serve yourself from the pitcher.
 - If you want a different beverage or ice chips: first fill your cup or glass with water from the pitcher and discard. Then fill it with the desired alternative. That "subtracts" the correct amount from your "bank account".
- Remove an estimated amount for foods that are liquid at room temperature or contain a lot of water (ex. gelatin, popsicles, sherbet, ice cream, soup, gravy, and watermelon).
 - Use mealtime fluid to take medications, if possible.

Tips for Satisfying Thirst with Less Fluid

- Suck on hard candy or lemon wedges, or chew athletic gum.
- Brush teeth often.
- Rinse with cold mouthwash.
- Use tart rather than extremely sweet beverages.
- Keep sodium intake as low as possible to feel less thirsty.

When Meal Intake is Poor

Poor appetite, feeling full quickly and not having the energy to cook are common side effects of heart failure. Your calorie needs may also be higher.

If you are underweight or losing too much weight, you may benefit from eating 6-8 small amounts daily. You may need nutrition supplements. Ask your doctor or dietitian for advice on the right ones for you.

If you are unable to shop and prepare meals, you may qualify for Meals-on-Wheels or be able to attend a senior center that serves lunch. Contact your local community service agencies for resources.

If you need help with meal planning, ask your doctor to refer you to a registered dietitian.

Recommended Resources

American Heart Association

(800) 242-8721
www.americanheart.org

American Stroke Association

(888) 478-7653
www.StrokeAssociation.org

Heart Failure Society of America

(651) 642-1633
www.hfsa.org

National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute

(301) 592-8573
www.nhlbi.nih.gov



(800) 482-0222
www.FirstToServe.com

