

Watching Your Weight to Manage CHF *By Daniel Schlosser, MD*

Congestive heart failure is a general term used to describe the state in which the heart cannot meet the demands of blood and oxygen supply for the body. This can occur either acutely, chronically or as a combination of both forms. There are also multiple causes, although the general condition and symptoms are managed similarly.

For this article we will focus on chronic heart failure and its management. This type of heart failure is of great concern because it often results in hospital admissions, and in particular, readmissions for the same patients. The symptoms of fluid retention are swelling in both ankles, shortness of breath, shortness of breath with activity, and the sudden onset of shortness of breath when lying down.

Nutrition Counseling & Planning Now Available

Registered Dietitian Aubrey Uhling is now seeing patients at Thunderbird Internal Medicine's suite C-1 location. A graduate of the Nutrition/Dietetics undergraduate program of the University of Arizona, she completed her Dietetic Internship through the University of Houston where she earned her Registered Dietitian license.

Aubrey's medical nutritional therapy and nutrition counseling helps individuals with weight loss, diabetes, heart and digestive issues, food allergies and those wishing to enhance their overall nutritional program. To schedule, call 602-341-5248.

Medications frequently used are Beta-blockers to help control blood pressure and heart rate and ACE inhibitors to lower blood pressure and reduce the workload of the heart. When blood pressure is high, the heart has to contract more forcefully which places more workload on the heart. Trying to maintain your fluid balance when natural regulation is not working can be tricky. Diuretics are another mainstay of treatment to address this issue. There is a balance between too much fluid in your body causing the swelling and shortness of breath and being too dry, which can adversely affect the kidneys. Having kidney issues can complicate the management of heart failure.

To help with this, knowing your baseline, or dry, weight can be a big help. You should weigh yourself daily. Usually, any gain of one or more pounds in a 24-hour period is due to water retention. A gain of five or more pounds above your baseline weight can be a problem suggesting your heart failure is quickly worsening. Such weight gain and sudden onset of symptoms is a leading cause of hospital readmission for heart failure patients. By daily monitoring your weight at home and having a plan of action with your doctor to temporarily increase your diuretic until your weight returns to the dry weight, likelihood of having to return to the hospital will be dramatically reduced. You should always discuss treatment options with your doctor before making a change.



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