HEALTH LITERACY & TEACH-BACK

Rosemary M. Gill, RN, MS, CDE
Veterans Health Education Coordinator
VA Palo Alto Health Care System
Goals

- Learn how health literacy impacts the way we teach patients
- Learn to teach patients critical skills effectively and efficiently
- Know the 6 required elements of discharge instructions for CHF patients
“Health literacy is the degree to which individuals have the capacity to obtain, process, and understand basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions.”

*Healthy People 2010.*
More than just the ability to read

May be able to read but have difficulty understanding:

- E.g.: => antibiotics will not treat their viral infection
- Almost half of all adults in the US have poor to marginal literacy skills.
- Very difficult for to follow treatment instructions, verbal or written.
- May not be able to understand prescription bottles.
47% of adults have trouble using numbers

- Print material
- Tables or graphs
- Relative risk (quantitative literacy)
- May not understand the significance of results in numbers
People with limited health literacy

- have trouble recognizing possible symptoms and knowing when to report those symptoms
- have particular trouble understanding medication warning labels
- One of the most common communication errors leading to litigation is inadequate explanations of diagnosis or treatment
- 75% (estimate) of people with chronic illness have limited health literacy skills
How do we help?

- Find out what each patient needs to know and teach that
- Find out what the patient is willing to do
1. What is the patient’s main problem today?
2. What does the patient need to do to care for his problem?
3. When should he notify us?
People remember:

- 10% of what they read
- 26% of what they hear
- less than 1/3 of what they see
- 50% of what they see and hear
- 90% of what you have them demonstrate
So, what can we do?

- Slow down
- Use non-medical language
- Draw pictures
- Limit the amount of information
- Encourage questions
- Ask pts to explain their understanding of their medical problem or treatment
- Use Teach-back
Teach Back

- Lets you know you have explained what the patient needs to know in a way the patient understands
Teach back

How can we structure the interview or the education?

 "Please tell me how you will take this medication when you get home."

 "Show me how you will use your inhaler/meter/etc when you are at home."
6 Required Elements

1. Weight monitoring
2. What to do if symptoms worsen
3. Diet
4. Discharge medications
5. Follow-up appointment
6. Activity level
CHF Patient Teaching Checklist

Part 1: Admission and Duration of Hospitalization

Your provider has documented that you have congestive heart failure. This maybe one of the reasons you came to the hospital. It is important to know your symptoms and how to manage yourself. We’d like to go over some important information.

Date Initials

___ ___ 1. Daily weights (Do you have a VA scale at home?)

___ ___ 2. What to do if symptoms worsen:
   - Weight gain of more than 2 or 3 pounds in one day.
   - Increase in shortness of breath.
   - Increase in leg swelling.

___ ___ 3. Diet/fluid restriction (review and provide a copy of the Sodium and Fluid Restrictions for Congestive Heart Failure handout)

___ ___ 4. Activity level (Do you have any questions about your activity level?)

___ ___ 5. Review medications related to heart failure

Additional references can be found on Krames on Demand

Part 2: Upon Discharge

Date Initials

___ ___ 1. Home Telehealth referral: 650-493-5000 ext: 62258

___ ___ 2. Your follow up appointment:
   - An appointment has been made for you on
   - If you do not hear about your appointment within 3 days, please call the Discharge Planner at 650-493-5000 ext: 69238

___ ___ 3. Place medicine discharge instructions in packet.

Unit

Initials Signature/Title

Unit

Initials Signature/Title

Unit

Initials Signature/Title

Unit

Initials Signature/Title

Patient Name: __________________________

VA PAHCS
Veteran Affairs Palo Alto Health Care System
Congestive Heart Failure (CHF)

What is CHF?
If you have been diagnosed with “heart failure”, it means your heart is not pumping as well as it should. It does NOT mean your heart has failed or that it has stopped beating.

What are the signs and symptoms of CHF?
- Weight gain
- Low energy
- Swelling in ankles, feet or legs
- Shortness of breath
- Confusion

Call the Advice Nurse at the Telephone Care Program (TCP) at 1-800-455-0057 if:
- You have more trouble breathing
- You gain more than 2 pounds in one day or 5 pounds in one week
- Your feet or ankles swell more than usual

If you have these other symptoms, notify your provider:
- You pass water less
- You get tired faster
- You begin to cough at night
- You think you are having side effects from your medications
- You faint or become dizzy
- You have pain or tightness in your chest

Activity
CHF may prevent you from being as active as you once were.

The following is a list of some general guidelines for physical activity:
- Avoid over exertion, especially activity that causes dizziness, moderate shortness of breath, or chest discomfort.
- Avoid physical activity in extreme temperatures or when you do not feel well.
- Avoid physical activity 1-2 hours after eating.
- Avoid tasks that require lifting heavy objects.
- If it hurts or causes pain, it is wrong! Avoid activities that cause you pain.
- Short walks are a good way to begin your physical activity.

Don’t exercise beyond outlined recommendations from your provider.
Remember, “More is not always better.” It’s important to pace your activity. Talk to your Health Care Provider if you would like a formal exercise program.

Rest
Planning rest periods throughout the day allows for your heart muscle to regain its strength. You may feel better if you take periodic naps. Be sure to put your feet up.

Special thanks to our colleagues at the Louis Stokes Cleveland VA for sharing their educational materials.
# Common Medications for CHF

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>How it Works</th>
<th>Important Information</th>
<th>Report to Your Provider</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Digoxin (Heart Pill)</td>
<td>Helps your heart pump stronger</td>
<td>• Do not skip doses</td>
<td>Loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, yellow vision, blurred vision, heart skipping beats, heart beating faster or slower than usual.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diuretics (Water Pill)</td>
<td>Water pills help rid your body of excess water in your lungs or feet and ankles.</td>
<td>• Take early in the day. • Stand up slowly to avoid dizziness.</td>
<td>Dizziness, weakness, skin rash, sudden weight changes, abdominal or muscle cramps, swelling of feet or legs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potassium</td>
<td>Replaces minerals which may be lost through diuretics.</td>
<td>• Take with meals to lessen stomach distress. • Dizziness, light headedness can occur until you adjust to the dosage.</td>
<td>Nausea, vomiting, confusion, leg cramps, numbness or tingling in hands, feet, or lips, irregular heartbeat, weakness or heaviness in legs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ace Inhibitors (Blood Pressure/Heart Pill)</td>
<td>Lowers the blood pressure and slows your heart rate. This lessens the work your heart has to do.</td>
<td>• Do not take other medicines unless discussed with your provider. • Have blood pressure checked regularly.</td>
<td>Headache, rash, racing heartbeat, dizziness that does not go away, swelling of face, mouth, hands, feet, trouble breathing or swallowing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beta Blockers (Blood Pressure/Heart Pill)</td>
<td>Lowers the blood pressure and slows your heart rate. This lessens the work your heart has to do.</td>
<td>• Drowsiness, dizziness, light headedness can occur until you adjust to the dosage. • Do not stop abruptly.</td>
<td>Dizziness that does not go away, swelling of face, mouth, hands, feet, trouble breathing or swallowing.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Admission – Congestive Heart Failure
Your Self-Management Tool for Hospital Stay

Instructions to the Patient: Tracking weight daily is important. Use this flow sheet to work with your team to stay informed and to prepare for discharge.

Your weight at admission is _________ pounds. Not sure? Ask your nurse or doctor. We are happy to help. Daily weights are an excellent way to track control of congestive heart failure.

Step 1: Get Informed

Areas that I would like further education about include (check all that apply):

- Daily Weights
- Warning Signs/Symptoms
- Low Salt Diet
- Medications

Step 2: Chart Your Progress

Write in your weight daily. If your weight changes by more than 2-3 pounds/day or 5 pounds/week at home, call your doctor.

Step 3: Prepare for Discharge

Answer these questions prior to leaving:
1) What is my new target weight? ________ (lbs)
2) Do I have a VA scale at home? Yes No (circle one)
   If not, ask your doctor to order one.
3) What is my water pill and what dose should I take? _________
   Discuss this with your doctor before discharge.

Patient Name
# Sodium and Fluid Restrictions for Congestive Heart Failure

**Limit sodium to 2000 milligrams per day**

This is about the amount of sodium in 1 teaspoon of salt, or about the size of your fingertip.

Even if you don’t add salt to the foods you eat or when you cook, you may still be getting a lot of sodium in your diet. Most foods that are canned or processed have a lot of sodium. Frozen dinners are also very high in sodium. Almost all restaurant meals (especially fast food places) have a lot of sodium.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use less added salt</th>
<th>High in Sodium</th>
<th>Use these instead</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Salt</td>
<td>Onion salt</td>
<td>Lemon juice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seasoned salt</td>
<td>Garlic Salt</td>
<td>Low sodium broth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soy sauce</td>
<td>MSG</td>
<td>Fresh garlic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baking soda</td>
<td>Bouillon cubes</td>
<td>Vinegar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baking powder</td>
<td>Tenderizers</td>
<td>Fresh onion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fish sauce</td>
<td>Teriyaki sauce</td>
<td>Black pepper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worcestershire sauce</td>
<td></td>
<td>Fresh or dried</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hot peppers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>herbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hot pepper sauce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Salt-free herb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(like Tabasco®)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>and spice mixes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(like Mrs. Dash®)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Limit canned foods**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High in sodium</th>
<th>Try this instead:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Canned soup</td>
<td>• Buy fresh or frozen vegetables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canned vegetables</td>
<td>Rinse and drain canned foods, do not use the liquid in the can</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canned meats</td>
<td>• Look for “no salt added” canned foods. Be careful, though! Some things labeled “reduced salt” still have a lot of sodium or salt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canned fish (tuna, sardines, anchovies)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canned vegetable juices (tomato or V8® juice)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Limit processed foods**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High in sodium</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American cheese</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Processed cheese spread</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Packaged dinner mixes (like Hamburger Helper®)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instant noodle lunches</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramen noodles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lunch meat (bologna, salami)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cottage cheese</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frozen dinners</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instant hot cereal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flavored rice/pasta mixes (like macaroni and cheese, Rice-a-Roni®)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Sodium and Fluid Restrictions for Congestive Heart Failure

## Limit salted foods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High in sodium</th>
<th>Try this instead</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Salted crackers</td>
<td>• Unsalted chips, pretzels or crackers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salted popcorn</td>
<td>• Unsalted nuts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salted chips</td>
<td>• Sprinkle popcorn with dried herbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salted pretzels</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salted nuts and seeds</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Limit cured foods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High in sodium</th>
<th>Try this instead</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ham</td>
<td>• Turkey, chicken or roast beef in sandwiches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hot dogs</td>
<td>• Turkey bacon, turkey sausage, turkey or chicken hot dogs are usually lower in fat. However, many still have a lot of sodium.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sausage</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Koshered meat</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smoked fish</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pickles</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sauerkraut</td>
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</table>

## Fluid Restriction

Your provider may limit the amount of liquid you drink each day, including any liquids taken with medications. Drinking too many liquids may force your heart to work harder. Fluids are foods that are liquid at room temperature. All of the items listed below count towards your fluid intake.

### Fluids: Water; Juice; Ice cubes; Coffee; Milk; Cream; Popsicle; Soup; Tea; Soups

### Foods: Yogurt; Pudding; Ice Cream; Sherbet; Gelatin (Jell-O);

### Suggestions to help with Thirst

To keep your mouth from getting dry: suck on hard candies, lemon slices; use a humidifier; and chewing gum.

## Measurements to help you track your fluid intake:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measurement</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 cup</td>
<td>8 ounces or 240 cc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 cups</td>
<td>32 ounces or 1 quart (qt) = 1000 cc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 milliliter (ml)</td>
<td>1 cc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 ounce (0z)</td>
<td>30 cc</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discharge Home – Congestive Heart Failure
Your Self-Management Tool for Home

Instructions to the Patient: Self care for congestive heart failure is important to keep you out of the hospital. This sheet will help you manage your care.

Step 1: Weigh Daily
My Discharge Weight _____ (lbs) on _____ (date)

Step 2: Take Your Pills
My Water Pills:
Name
Dose
Time of Day

Step 3: Know Your Warning Signs
If you have any of these warning signs, call the Advice Nurse at the Telephone Care Program (TCP) at 800-455-0057.
1) Weight gain of more than 2 or 3 pounds in one day, or 5 pounds in one week.
2) Increase in shortness of breath.
3) Increase in leg swelling.

Bring this sheet to your appointment.

Follow up appointment: ________________  Patient Name: ________________________________
Final Comments

No one can absorb all we need to teach at once. Try not to give more than 3 handouts at each visit.

Have the patient come back for more teaching or follow up by phone.
WHAT QUESTIONS DO YOU HAVE?
Call Me!

- Rosemary Gill, RN, MS ext. 62535
- rosemary.gill@va.gov