Daily Weigh-In: Reduce Risk for Heart Failure


“Heart failure is the most common reason for hospitalization among Americans. Our data suggest that a simple bathroom scale could empower patients in managing their own disease and alert their physicians to early signs of heart failure decompensation—failure of the heart to maintain adequate blood circulation.”

Sarwat Chaudhry, M.D

CARE Tips for people with heart failure

• Weigh yourself daily.
• Keep in close contact with your doctor or nurse if you gain more than 2 pounds in a week.
• Watch the amount of sodium in your diet. Processed foods and restaurant foods are usually high in sodium. Sodium causes the body to hold onto water and makes it more difficult for the heart to pump.
CARE: Community Alliance for Research and Engagement is committed to improving health in New Haven. One goal is to share important research findings in our community so that they are easily accessible to all – to educate, inform, and spur action. Yale investigators give thanks to the women, men and children of New Haven who participate in research projects designed to improve health. We value your participation and recognize that you are central to these efforts. We hope that you can use this information to prevent disease and promote good health in your family and in our community.

Heart failure is the most common reason for older people to be admitted to the hospital. By tracking the body’s natural warning signs for heart failure, doctors and their patients may be able to prevent this dangerous condition. Yale researchers set out to study if:

- changes in weight lead to increased heart failure; and
- weight gain is a risk factor or an indicator for upcoming hospitalization.

Older people with heart failure who participated in this study weighed themselves daily on an electronic scale in their homes. The scale was attached to a computer through a phone line. The computer stored their daily weight. Nurses were able to review their weight every day. People who were hospitalized due to heart failure were compared to those who were not hospitalized.

Results showed a link between weight gain and heart failure:

- A weight gain of 2 pounds or more within a week led to a greater risk for hospitalization.

**Definitions**

Heart failure means that the heart’s pumping ability is weaker than normal. The heart cannot pump enough oxygen and nutrients to meet the body’s needs.

**Bottom Line**

A small increase in body weight leads to increased heart failure and hospitalization in people who have a history of heart failure.