

What is Heart Failure?

Heart failure is a weakening of the heart's ability to pump blood. The heart hasn't stopped, but it's not working at peak efficiency to provide the body the oxygen and nutrients it needs.

Symptoms of heart failure may include shortness of breath; swelling in the legs, ankles or abdomen; rapid weight gain from fluid accumulation; dizziness, tiredness, weakness; cold or clammy skin, a rapid or irregular heartbeat; or coughing or wheezing. People with heart failure may need to be hospitalized if these symptoms become severe.

The body will try to compensate if the heart muscle isn't working well. The body will hold salt and water; make more blood than normal; the heart will beat faster; and the heart will get bigger. Despite the heart's best efforts, the muscle walls become weaker over time and get worn out.

Heart failure can result from:

- hardening of the arteries,
- coronary artery disease,
- a heart attack,
- damage from infection , alcohol or drug abuse,
- high blood pressure, kidney disease, diabetes, or a defect from birth.

Heart Failure Quality Measures

Below are the results for 7 indicators of care. Each measure is important when evaluating quality of care, for both the hospital and patient. Each measure is defined, shows progress over time based on a calendar year, and is compared to the Hospital’s goal. In addition, a section on what the patient should know and do is included.

The Hospital has identified a goal for each measure and chose to share that goal with readers and the Community. The goals you see below are typically high and based on the performance levels of “best practice” hospitals. These goals may be aggressive in some cases and a challenge to attain. But, they do reflect the level of care the Hospital wants to provide.

The data you will find below for measures #1 through #4 are the same data submitted to our accrediting body, The Joint Commission (www.JointCommission.org), and the Medicare program (www.HospitalCompare.hhs.gov) and viewable on their websites.

For further information or to get your questions answered, please contact Union Hospital’s Medical Affairs Division at (330) 364-0803.

1	This indicator measures the percent of patients discharged home after an inpatient stay with heart failure that are given information about their condition and care. Patient education about medicines, diet, activities, weight monitoring, follow-up appointments, signs to watch for, and action to take if symptoms worsen is important in order to prevent further hospitalization, a trip to the emergency room, a re-admission, or complications.						
Heart failure patients receiving specific discharge instructions about their condition.	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="665 1344 906 1413">2007</th> <th data-bbox="906 1344 1169 1413">YTD December 2008</th> <th data-bbox="1169 1344 1393 1413">Goal</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="665 1413 906 1522">92.0%</td> <td data-bbox="906 1413 1169 1522">93.5%</td> <td data-bbox="1169 1413 1393 1522">100%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	2007	YTD December 2008	Goal	92.0%	93.5%	100%
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92.0%	93.5%	100%					
What you should know	<p>For this measure, a higher percentage means higher quality of care. Our goal is based on a comparison to data from over 400 other hospitals. We strive to be the best-of-the-best. Meeting our goal will mean that we are doing better than 95% of the hospitals in the database.</p> <p>Although hospital staff is responsible for giving information to the patient, the patient is responsible for following the physician’s instructions.</p>						

2	This indicator measures the percent of patients with heart failure that had a special test to evaluate heart muscle function before or during hospitalization, or planned for after discharge.		
Heart failure patients who had the function of the main pumping chamber of the heart (i.e., left ventricle) checked within the last year.	2007	YTD December 2008	Goal
	96.9%	98.0%	100%
What you should know	<p>For this measure, a higher percentage means higher quality of care. Our goal is based on a comparison to data from over 400 other hospitals. We strive to be the best-of-the-best. Meeting our goal will mean that we are doing better than 95% of the hospitals in the database.</p> <p>A simple ultrasound procedure, ordered by a physician, is used to check how hard the heart muscle is working. The results are then used to help select the appropriate medication. It is important for patients to take their medications as prescribed by their physician.</p>		

3	This indicator measures the percent of heart failure patients who were prescribed specific medicines to improve the heart's ability to pump blood.		
Heart failure patients prescribed either an angiotensin converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitor or an angiotensin receptor blocker (ARB) upon discharge from the hospital.	2007	YTD December 2008	Goal
	88.3%	92.1%	100%
What you should know	<p>For this measure, a higher percentage means higher quality of care. Our goal is based on a comparison to data from over 400 other hospitals. We strive to be the best-of-the-best. Meeting our goal will mean that we are doing better than 95% of the hospitals in the database.</p> <p>In many cases, medication treatment with either an ACEI or an ARB has reduced complications and death in patients with heart failure with left ventricular systolic dysfunction. As always, it is important for patients to take their medications as prescribed by their physician.</p>		

4	This indicator measures the percent of adult heart failure patients with a history of smoking within the last year who were given advice and/or counseling to quit smoking.		
Heart failure patients given advice about stopping smoking while they are in the hospital.	2007	YTD December 2008	Goal
	100.0%	100.0%	100%
What you should know	<p>For this measure, a higher percentage means higher quality of care. Our goal is based on a comparison to data from over 400 other hospitals. We strive to be the best-of-the-best. Meeting our goal will mean that we are doing better than 95% of the hospitals in the database.</p> <p>Smoking harms the heart, lungs, and blood vessels. It can make the heart and lungs work harder and make existing heart disease worse. A smoker is more likely to quit after receiving counseling.</p>		

5	This indicator measures the average length of time, in days, a heart failure patient admitted to the hospital for an inpatient stay remains in the hospital.		
Average length of stay for a heart failure patient.	2007	YTD December 2008	Goal
	4.6	4.8	Less than 4.1
What you should know	<p>For this measure, smaller numbers mean better performance. Our goal is based on data provided for use by the Medicare program.</p> <p>An inpatient stay is good to stabilize a patient or treat a sudden recurrence of symptoms. Each day a patient stays in a hospital must be justified by the need for care. Also, studies have shown people recover better at home.</p>		

6	This indicator measures the percent of heart failure patients returning within 30 days or less to the hospital and re-admitted as an inpatient for their heart failure. This indicator does not include outpatient visits, emergency department visits, or “elective” admissions for other problems or medical conditions.		
Readmissions of heart failure patients within 30 days or less.	2007	YTD December 2008	Goal
	25.4%	21.1%	Less than 18.6%
What you should know	<p>For this measure, a smaller percentage means higher quality of care. Our goal is based on comparing ourselves to the average rate of hospitals participating in an extensive database.</p> <p>A readmission may mean the disease is getting worse, the patient had another acute onset of heart failure, or the patient is not following their physician’s discharge instructions from their last hospitalization.</p>		

7	This indicator measures the percent of heart failure patients that die during their inpatient stay.		
Inpatient mortality for heart failure patients.	2007	YTD December 2008	Goal
	2.3%	2.6%	Less than 3.0%
What you should know	<p>For this measure, a smaller percentage means higher quality of care. Our goal is based on comparing ourselves to the average rate of hospitals participating in an extensive database.</p> <p>Heart failure is a chronic condition that usually gets worse over time. Treatment can slow the disease and help the patient feel better and live longer. Following your physician’s instructions is important.</p>		