

## **HEART FAILURE SELF MANAGEMENT PLAN**

If you get any of the symptoms listed below please call the doctors surgery on 0121 472 0129 and speak with a doctor who can advise you further or if we are closed please dial 111 for advice:

- Increased cough
- Increased swelling
- Increase in shortness of breath with activity or at rest
- Increase in the number of pillows needed
- Unrelieved chest pain
- Wheezing or chest tightness at rest
- Need to sit in chair to sleep
- Anything else unusual that bothers you

There are some self help measures that could improve your quality of life; these are noted below for you to consider:

### **Diet**

If you are overweight, try to lose weight to reduce the extra burden on your heart. Do not have too much salt in your diet, as salt can cause water retention. For example, do not add salt to your food at the table and avoid cooking with it.

### **Alcohol**

You should not exceed the recommended amount of alcohol, as more than the recommended upper limits can be harmful. See separate leaflet called Alcohol and sensible drinking for more details.

### **Do not smoke**

The chemicals in tobacco cause blood vessels to narrow, which can make heart failure worse. You may benefit from being referred to a local 'stop smoking' clinic if you are finding it hard to stop smoking.

### **Exercise**

For most people with heart failure, regular exercise is advised. The fitter the heart, the better it will pump. The level of exercise to aim for will vary from person to person. Before you start to increase your exercise, get the go-ahead from your doctor, as some people with heart valve problems should not exercise. If you are not used to exercise, you could start by going for a daily walk.

### **Immunisation**

You should have an annual influenza jab and be immunised against the pneumococcal bacterium.

### **Medication**

It is important that you take the medication prescribed to you. If you are having problems remembering to take your medication regularly consider purchasing a pill organiser to help you or speak to your doctor who may be able to help you further.

**Weigh yourself each morning** – this will be ticked by the doctor if this is appropriate for you to do and is only relevant if you have moderate-to-severe heart failure. If you retain fluid rapidly, your weight goes up rapidly too. So, if your weight goes up by more than 2 kg (about 4 lb) over 1-3 days, then you should contact a doctor. You may need an increase in your medication.