Heart Talk: What is Heart Failure?

Module 1: Education for Nursing Assistants
What is Heart Failure?

- Weakness of the heart muscle
- Sometimes also called:
  - Congestive heart failure
  - Pulmonary edema
  - Fluid on lungs
  - Retention of fluid
Common Symptoms of Heart Failure

1. Hard to breathe
2. Swollen ankles, legs, or abdomen (edema)
3. Weak and tired
Edema (Swelling)

- Fluid goes to the lowest level in the body
- Ambulatory patients have swelling in the feet, ankles, and legs
- Bedridden patients have swelling in their buttocks and abdomen area
- Pressing on skin will leave a dent
Heart Failure is Treatable

- Medications
- Procedures
- Surgery
Heart Failure is Chronic

It requires lifelong treatment.
Heart Failure is Common

More than 5 million Americans have it and it causes over 1 million hospitalizations each year.

What to Report

- Notify the nurse if your patient reports:
  - Having a hard time breathing
  - New swelling in their feet, ankles, legs, stomach, and/or buttocks area
  - Any increase in old swelling
- As always, report anything you notice that seems abnormal
Vital Signs

Always report abnormal values:
♥  O₂ Saturation
♥  Heart rate
♥  Respiratory rate
♥  Blood pressure
Weight

• Measuring their weight every day is very important for patients with heart failure
• Weight is used to determine how much extra fluid (water) patients with heart failure have in their bodies
• Weigh: same time, same scale, same amount of clothing, after urinating
• Report increases of: 3 lbs (1.3 kgs) in a day or 5 lbs (2.3 kgs) in a week
Fluid Intake and Output (I & O)

- Monitoring fluid intake and output is very important for patients with heart failure.
- Patients take medications to help get rid of fluid.
- Doctors monitor “ins and outs” (I & O) to choose medications.
- Inaccurate I & O recordings can lead to the wrong treatment!
Intake and Output (I & O)

Know how to measure fluids

8oz 6oz 4oz
240cc 180cc 120cc
Calculating I & O
Over 24 hours/One day

Example 1
- Intake = 2000 cc
- Output = 1000 cc
- I & O = 2000 – 1000 = +1000 (positive)

Example 2
- Intake = 1000 cc
- Output = 2000 cc
- I & O = 1000 – 2000 = -1000 (negative)
Common Errors

Weight and I & O

Large weight changes of more than 5 lbs (2kg)
  • Check for a measuring error

Very low intake/output
  • Check for accuracy of recording
Summary

- Heart failure is a treatable lifelong illness
- Monitoring vital signs, I & O, and weight will help your patient with heart failure
- Nursing assistants play an important role in keeping patients with heart failure healthy
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