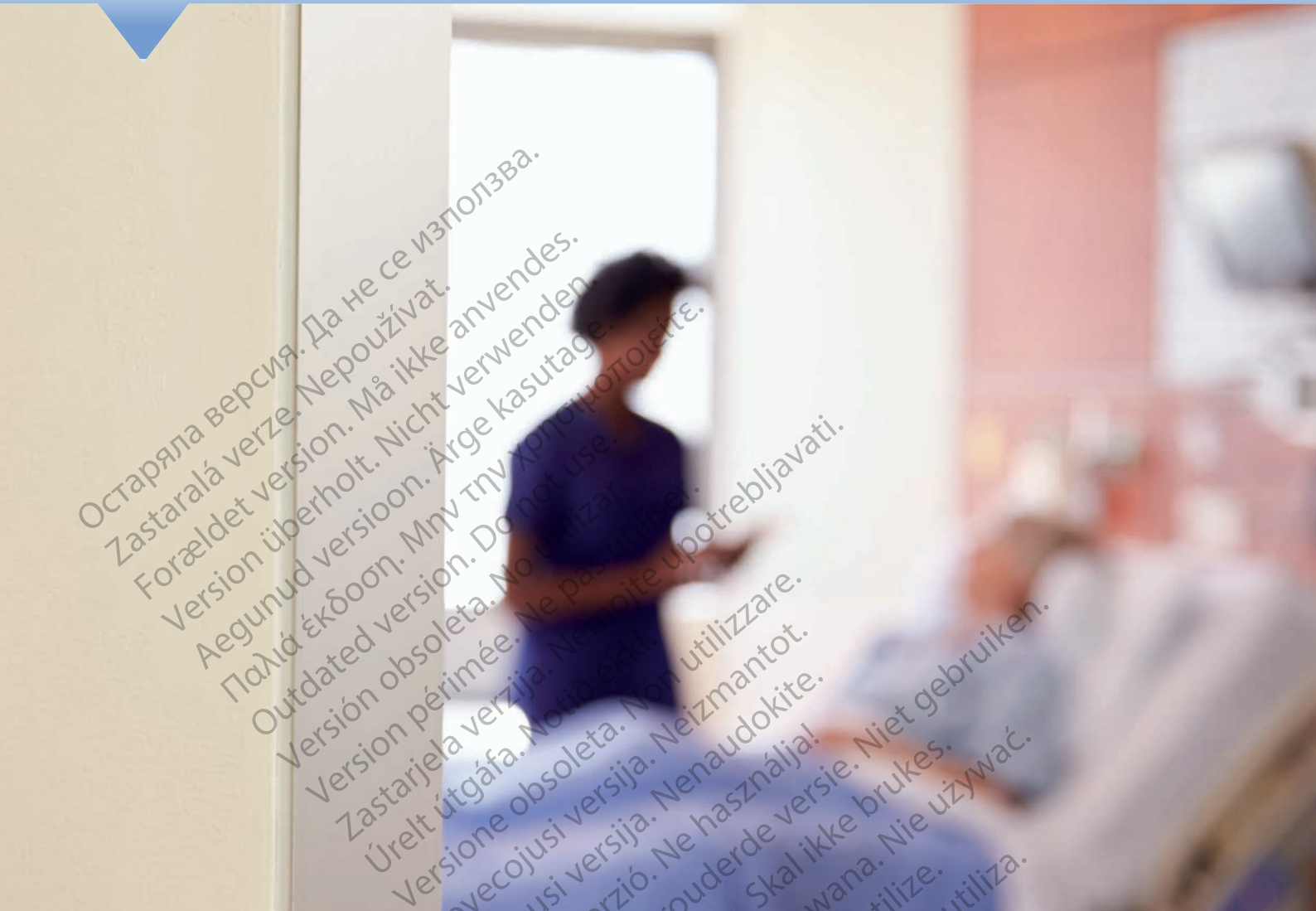




Going into hospital



As a person with heart failure, if you follow your treatment and doctor's recommendation, it will help to make you feel better and avoid unnecessary admissions to hospital.

Even so, it is not uncommon for people with heart failure to be admitted to hospital.

This can be on a planned or emergency basis, or it may be for reasons unrelated to heart failure. So it is good to be prepared for this common event. Please read on to find out more.



Things you may need in hospital

If you know in advance that you are going into the hospital, it is helpful to take things you will need. These include:

- **All of the medicines you take.** It is also helpful if you can take a list of the medicines you take, and how and when you take them.



- **A list of contact details for family members, friends and members of your healthcare team**



- **Some money** for snacks, drinks etc.



If you are admitted to hospital at very short notice or in an emergency, things may be a bit more complicated. You may wish to do some or all of these things:

- Let friends, family and other relevant people know where you are, and why.
- Ask somebody to bring your medicines to you, along with all of the things mentioned in the list above.
- Ask somebody to bring the personal items you need, such as nightwear, a change of clothes, toiletries and so on.

Whatever the reason you are admitted, it is a good idea to talk to staff in the hospital and make sure they know:

- That you have heart failure. Also tell them about any other health problems you have, and any allergies.
- Any dietary needs you may have.
- All details of your medicines and treatment plan and side effects to medications you have experienced before.
- The contact details for relevant family members or friends.



You can also inform the hospital staff about your participation in the patient support program, since it will contain information that is useful to them. You could also ask them to tell you the name of the person you should speak to if you have any questions about your care or treatment.



Tips to make your hospital stay better

Some aspects of a hospital stay can be challenging. You may feel a bit stressed or anxious, find it difficult to sleep or find yourself becoming bored in the hospital. Here are some tips that can help:



- **If you think you may become stressed or anxious**, why not start using a breathing exercise such as the one below:
 1. Sit in a comfortable place and close your eyes.
 2. Take a slow, deep breath in through your nose while counting to four.
 3. Breathe out slowly and as you do so, count to six or eight.
 4. Repeat this process at least four times
- **If you fear boredom**, then take (or ask somebody to bring you) something portable to do, like books, puzzles, knitting or drawing equipment. If your stay is planned, then find out in advance whether the hospital offers access to TV, radio and computers, and whether these will cost anything.
- **It can be difficult to sleep in hospitals**, because there is a lot going on, even at night. Eye masks (that keep out light) and ear plugs can help. If you find yourself having trouble sleeping, do tell the hospital staff, because good quality sleep is really helpful to your recovery.



Procedures

If you are admitted to hospital, and particularly if you are admitted as a direct result of your heart failure, you may undergo some of the following tests and procedures. For example, you may have:

- **Blood tests** — these may be used to determine the extent or nature of heart failure, or to identify other problems.
- **An electrocardiogram (also called an ECG or EKG)** — this shows the electrical activity in your heart. It can be a one-time procedure, or be carried out as 24-hour monitoring.
- **An echocardiogram, or 'echo'** — this is a procedure in which sound waves are used to assess how well your heart is pumping and whether your heart valves are working properly.
- **Chest X-rays** — these can show whether your heart is enlarged, and any excess fluid on your lungs, amongst other problems.



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If you keep track of your progress in a diary, this can be a great source of information for doctors and nurses when you are in the hospital, so don't forget to take it with you.

If you happen to have an urgent medical concern, please call your doctor, go to your local emergency room, or call your local Emergency Contact number. Remember, your doctor is your primary source for information on your condition and treatment. Be sure to speak with them if you have any questions or concerns.

References

1. Gheorghiade M, Vaduganathan M, Fernalow GC, Bonow RO. Rehospitalization for heart failure: problems and perspectives. *J Am Coll Cardiol* 2013 Jan 29; 6 (4): 391-403.