



Cardiac Resource Guide

Coram[®]

♥CVS specialty infusion services

Welcome to Coram

Our goal at Coram® CVS Specialty® Infusion Services (Coram) is to help you on your path to better health. We do this by providing you with the best care possible during your inotropic therapy at home.

We've also created this guide with you mind. Use it to manage your heart failure symptoms with confidence knowing you have the support of an entire Coram care team whenever you need it.

We look forward to serving you!

-Your Coram Team

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Our experienced care team of dietitians, nurses and pharmacists are ready to help you any time, day or night.

We're only a phone call away. Call **1-800-423-1411**.

Getting started

In the coming days, you'll learn how to administer your inotropic therapy in the comfort of your home. You'll also learn how to care for your catheter.

A nurse will visit your home to answer your questions. You'll receive your inotropic therapy from us on a regular basis. You'll also have a team of nurses and pharmacists you can talk with. Simply call them any time day or night.

During your course of treatment, you'll have plenty of people you can count on. But be sure to count on yourself, too. Learn everything you can about heart failure. Read brochures and other materials, and visit our website at coramhc.com. Finally, stay in close contact with your clinical team.

If you have questions or concerns, write them down. Be sure to discuss them with your health care team involved in your treatment.

What do I need to know?

Making this transition can seem overwhelming at first. But with Coram, you'll have a clinical care team supporting you.

Before you begin

There are important steps you must take before you begin your infusion. Refer to the SASH (Saline, Administration, Saline, Heparin) method at coramhc.com/patients/sash-method for details.

You'll learn how to:

- Keep your catheter clean to help prevent infections
- Administer the inotropic therapy using your infusion pump (as ordered by your doctor)
- Change the medication bag and tubing
- Monitor your symptoms and progress

In a very short time, this new procedure will become part of your everyday routine.

Becoming familiar with your inotropic therapy and supplies

Your doctor has prescribed an inotropic therapy to be given to you intravenously (IV – or through a vein). Your Coram team is here to help you with this medication and to observe your response to it. They'll also communicate with your doctor when needed.

- Your local Coram branch will provide you with the equipment and medication you'll need to infuse your therapy at home. Just before you leave the hospital, you'll be connected to an IV pump provided by Coram. Depending on your therapy, your nurse will coordinate the proper equipment and supplies for you to use.
- Your medication bag will be prepared by your Coram pharmacist. The tubing will already be connected to the medication bag. After a few simple steps, your medication will be ready to use.
- Your nurse will explain the purpose and use of each item during your first few visits. Your Clinical Support Specialist will coordinate the amount of each item you'll need to have on hand. They will call you to schedule your routine delivery of these items.

Understanding heart failure

It's important to learn all you can about heart failure. This will help you know why your doctor has prescribed inotropic therapy for you.

What is heart failure?

Heart failure happens when the heart cannot pump enough blood through the body. When the heart cannot pump enough blood, the body lacks oxygen that it needs to work well. Often times, the loss in pumping action is a symptom of a heart problem. Heart failure gets more serious as the heart loses its ability to pump blood. Even the mildest heart failure is a serious health problem that must be treated.

How common is heart failure?

About 6.5 million Americans over 20 years of age have heart failure. One major study estimates about 960,000 new heart failures occur each year.¹

What causes heart failure?

There are many causes of heart failure. These include coronary artery disease, heart attack, high blood pressure, irregular heart rhythms and abnormal heart valves. Other diseases, such as diabetes and lung disorders, can also cause heart failure.

How is my heart supposed to work?

Your heart has four chambers. These chambers work together to move your blood throughout your body. As the heart pumps, it pushes blood through the body's blood vessels and back into the heart. From the heart's right chambers (including the right ventricle), the blood moves into the lungs. In the lungs, the blood picks up oxygen, and then returns to the left chambers of the heart. Finally, the heart forces the blood back into the blood vessels. The cycle continues, with the blood again delivering oxygen to the body's tissues.

What happens in heart failure?

Normally, a healthy heart pumps blood by relaxing and then contracting its chambers. When the chambers relax, blood comes in. When the chambers contract, blood is pushed out, carrying oxygen and nutrients to the rest of the body.

Heart failure occurs when the weakened heart muscle loses its ability to pump well. The chambers cannot relax and contract as they usually do. Less blood moves through the chambers and more blood stays in the heart.

Managing symptoms

Inotropic therapy helps you manage your heart failure symptoms. If you have any of the common symptoms listed below, rate each of them on a 0-10 scale. A rating of “0” means you have no symptom. A “5” means you feel some discomfort from your symptom. A “10” means that the symptom is the worst that you can possibly imagine.

If you are experiencing any of these symptoms at a level greater than 5, contact your medical team right away.

To learn more and track your symptoms, refer to the *Rate Your Symptoms* section of the *Cardiac Therapy Self-Monitoring Guide*.

Common heart failure symptoms

- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Itching
- Weight loss
- Diarrhea
- Feeling drowsy or sleepy
- Fatigue
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Loss of appetite
- Being short of breath
- Constipation
- Pain

In addition to managing your symptoms, you’ll need to monitor your temperature, blood pressure and weight. Do this daily or as instructed by your doctor. It’s best to do it at the same time each day. Let your Coram team know if you need a scale or blood pressure cuff. We can provide it for you to use during your inotropic therapy.

Managing your diet

Your medical team may recommend a sodium-restricted or low-salt diet. This type of diet can help reduce high blood pressure and manage your heart failure symptoms. Talk to your doctor or dietitian about low-salt diet guidelines. You can also use the tips below to eat less salt.

How much sodium do you need?

Healthy adults need only 500 milligrams (mg) of sodium per day, which is the amount of ¼ teaspoon of salt. Most Americans eat much more sodium than that — on average, about 3,400 mg daily.² Healthy people should limit sodium to 2,300 mg per day. But, those with conditions like high blood pressure or congestive heart failure may need to reduce their sodium intake even more.

Tips for cutting back on sodium in restaurants

- Always taste foods before adding salt or other seasonings.
- Ask that foods be prepared without added salt.
- Use pepper or lemon juice to enhance flavors.
- Go easy on condiments, dressings, gravy and sauces. Order foods without them, or have them served on the side.
- Keep it simple:
 - Order broiled fish or a plain cut of meat or fish. Avoid entrées covered with sauce, gravy or cheese.
 - Choose plain sandwiches made with fresh vegetable toppings. Limit processed meats, bacon and sausages.

- Check the menu and look for words that suggest a food is high in sodium. These include cured, corned, pickled, smoked, marinated, au jus, broth, soy sauce or teriyaki sauce. Avoid these foods.

Tips for cutting back on sodium at home

- Read the Nutrition Facts labels on food packaging. Select foods with less than 600 mg of sodium per meal.
- Cut the salt in your favorite recipes by half, or leave it out completely. With time, your taste buds will adjust to less salt. Buy unprocessed foods. Good choices include:
 - Fresh or frozen fruits and vegetables
 - Unseasoned whole grain foods, such as brown rice, whole wheat pasta and plain oatmeal
 - Unseasoned meats, poultry and fish
 - Dried (not canned) beans, lentils and peas
- Use herbs or salt-free seasonings instead of salt to boost flavors.
- Use sea salt sparingly. Sea salt has sodium just like regular table salt.
- Be aware that low-sodium versions of some foods, such as soy sauce, are still very high in sodium.
- Keep the salt shaker off the table.

Making the most of your doctor visit

There may be times when you don't get everything you need from a doctor visit. Anxiety, poor health or lack of sleep may make it hard for you to focus. Use these tips to get the most from your doctor visits.

- Make a list of all your medications. Include the doses and the times you take them. Highlight any new or over-the-counter medications.
- Write down a list of questions you want to ask your doctor.
- Keep a health care folder, and bring it with you to all your doctor visits. This folder should contain important medical records and educational materials. It should also contain details about other doctor visits.
- Maintain a daily log in between your visits. Record any heart failure-related problems or symptoms you have had. You can use the *Rate Your Symptoms* section in the *Cardiac Therapy Self-Monitoring Guide* to help track.
- If labs tests were done, ask your Coram pharmacist for a copy of your latest lab work. Review it before the doctor visit. Ask the doctor about any lab test results you don't understand.
- Listen carefully to the questions being asked by your doctor. Answer them honestly.
- Ask your questions and describe your symptoms in a clear and concise manner. This is when the list of questions and the folder of medical records may come in handy.
- Write down or ask for written instructions for your care plan from your doctor or health care team.
- Ask how you can better educate yourself about your health.
- If you feel something isn't right, feel free to ask more specific questions.
- Ask a trusted family member or friend to come with you to your doctor visit to help you by taking notes or remembering what the doctor said.

Caring for yourself during inotropic therapy

Below are tips on how to use three tools that will help you take care of yourself while you are on inotropic therapy.

- **Keep track of your weight using a scale.** Remember, changes in your weight could mean changes in how well your heart is working.
 1. Place the scale on a flat surface. Make sure the battery is working.
 2. Weigh yourself every day, wearing similar clothing each time. Be sure to do it at the same time each day.
 3. Write down your weight in the *Cardiac Therapy Self-Monitoring Guide* included with your *Cardiac Resource Guide*.
 4. Keep your health care team updated on your weight. Tell them if you gain more than two pounds in one day, or more than five pounds in one week.
- **Keep track of your blood pressure with a blood pressure cuff.** The blood pressure cuff goes on your wrist. If your IV is in your arm, make sure to use the blood pressure cuff on the other wrist.
 1. Put the batteries into the battery holder on the cuff. Close the holder.
 2. Wrap the blood pressure cuff around your wrist.
 3. Rest your elbow on a table or the arm of a chair. Keep the wrist with the blood pressure cuff at the level of your heart.

4. Press the start button.
5. Write down your blood pressure in your *Cardiac Therapy Self-Monitoring Guide*.

- **Keep track of how much fluid you are taking in with a water bottle.** Most people can only have 1½ liters (6 cups) or 2 liters (8 cups) of fluid per day. Your doctor or nurse will tell you how much you can have.

Here's one way to keep track of your fluids. Refill your cup or mug after you finish a drink. Then empty it into the water bottle. For example, you may drink a mug of coffee in the morning. After you finish the coffee, refill the mug with water. Then empty the mug into the water bottle. This way, you can tell how much fluid you took in with your coffee.

Keep doing this for all of the fluids you drink all day. Once you fill the water bottle, you will know you have reached 1 liter of fluid. If your doctor says you should drink more than 1 liter, empty the bottle. Then continue until you reach your suggested amount.

Heart failure resources

The following is a list of resources to help you and your caregivers learn about heart failure. This listing does not mean that we endorse these other organizations or the information they provide. Discuss any information from these websites with your heart team. Be sure to do this before making any changes in your health care, insurance coverage or home care provider.

Coram

coramhc.com

Our website includes educational resources, patient stories, how-to videos and more.

American Diabetes Association (ADA)

diabetes.org

This nonprofit organization provides education, advocacy, support and research for those affected by diabetes.

American Heart Association (AHA)

heart.org

The mission of this nonprofit organization is to reduce disability and death from cardiovascular diseases and stroke. AHA's local chapters provide education, support groups and nutritional information.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

cdc.gov

The CDC is a federal agency that provides statistics, information on diseases, and public health information to prevent and control infectious and chronic diseases.

Heart Failure Society of America (HFSA)

hfsa.org

The HFSA represents the first organized effort by heart failure experts from the Americas to provide a forum for all those interested in heart function, heart failure and congestive heart failure research and patient care.

National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute (NHLBI)

nhlbi.nih.gov

The NHLBI provides global leadership for a research, education and teaching program regarding diseases of the heart, blood and lungs.

National Kidney Foundation (NKF)

kidney.org

The NKF is a nonprofit health organization dedicated to preventing kidney and urinary tract diseases.

Qualidigm

qualidigm.org

This national consulting and research firm is dedicated to advancing the quality, safety and effectiveness of health care. On their website, they offer a series of educational videos about living with heart failure. The videos are available in English and Spanish.

1-800-423-1411 | [coramhc.com](https://www.coramhc.com)



1 <https://hfsa.org/patient-hub/learn-about-heart-failure>. Accessed November 19, 2020.

2 Jackson SL, Coleman King SM, Zhao L, Cogswell ME. Prevalence of sodium intake in the United States. MMWR. 2016;64(52):1394-7.

This information is not a substitute for medical advice or treatment. Talk to your doctor or health care provider about this information and any health related questions you have. Coram assumes no liability whatsoever for the information provided or for any diagnosis or treatment made as a result of this information.

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Your privacy is important to us. Our employees are trained regarding the appropriate way to handle your private health information.

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