

Health Advocate

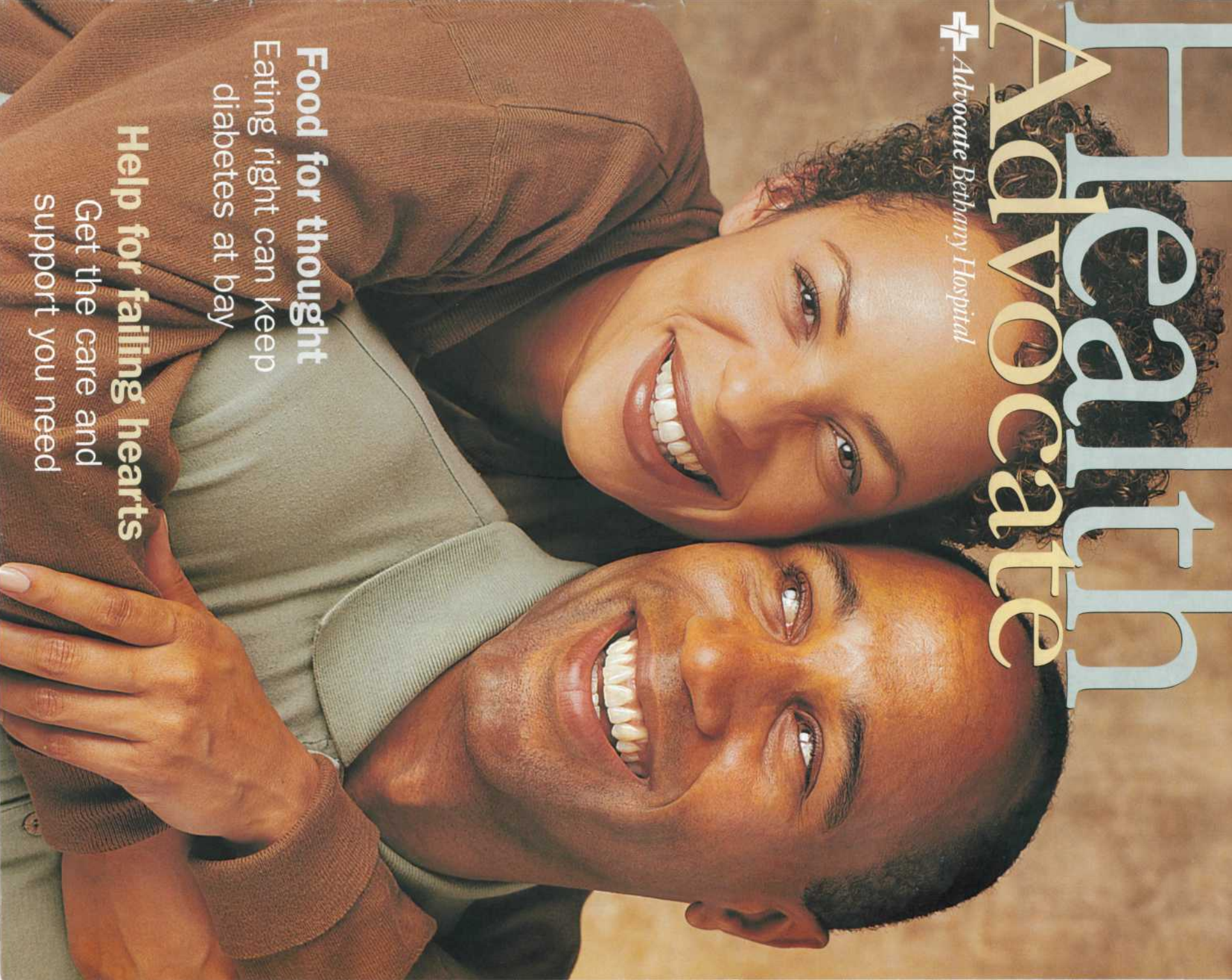
 Advocate Bethany Hospital

Food for thought

Eating right can keep
diabetics at bay

Help for failing hearts

Get the care and
support you need



Help for failing

Advocate Bethany Hospital offers care and support for people with congestive heart failure

Congestive heart failure (CHF), a condition in which the heart weakens and is unable to pump enough blood to the body's other organs, is on the rise in the United States. Approximately 5 million Americans have CHF and about 550,000 new cases are diagnosed each year. Those most at risk of developing CHF are African-Americans. Men are at higher risk than women, although the difference narrows after age 65.

At Advocate Bethany Hospital, people with CHF benefit from a full-service program, both inpatient and outpatient, that helps manage their illness and allows them to live full lives. "Our goal is to educate patients about their condition and teach them how to live with it," says Susan Archie, CHF coordinator at Bethany Hospital. "We talk with them about lifestyle, dietary habits and family history so that we better understand their needs and how to help manage their illness and improve their lives."

One common problem for those with CHF is shortness of breath because fluid collects in the lungs. Another concern is edema (excessive swelling in the legs, ankles or other areas of the body) due to



hearts

inadequate circulation. CHF also can impair the kidneys' ability to discard sodium and water—creating additional swelling throughout the body. Doctors may prescribe medications to improve the flow of blood and oxygen throughout the body and decrease water retention.


Managing symptoms through medication, along with diet and exercise, can prevent hospitalization and serious complications. That's why Bethany dietitians recommend changes in patients' eating habits,

especially salt and fluid intake.

"CHF patients are taught ways to limit their intake of high-salt foods by using herbs instead of salt," Archie says. "Many patients aren't aware of how much fluid they're consuming every day in things like ice cubes and certain fruits or foods."

While mild exercise is an important part of care for most CHF patients, Archie advises them to have a stress test to determine which type of exercise is safest.

In addition to dietitians, CHF patients at Bethany Hospital have access to pastoral care, a social worker and homemaker assistance to help with cooking, cleaning and running errands. If patients require any special medical equipment when they leave the hospital, it's quickly provided for their use at home. There also is a monthly CHF outpatient support group.

Once patients leave the hospital, Archie keeps in touch through weekly telephone calls. "They always have a link to someone at Bethany Hospital," she says. "It's comforting for patients to know that if they can't reach their physician, we're here for them." 

What is congestive heart failure?

Congestive heart failure (CHF) is a condition in which the heart can't pump enough blood to the body's other organs.

Causes of CHF

- Narrowed arteries that supply blood to the heart muscle
- Scar tissue from past heart attacks that interferes with the heart's ability to pump blood
- High blood pressure
- Heart valve disease due to past rheumatic fever or other causes
- Primary disease of the heart muscle
- Heart defects present at birth
- Infection of heart valves and/or heart muscle

Symptoms of CHF

- Shortness of breath, especially while lying down
- Persistent coughing or wheezing
- Buildup of excess fluid in body tissue
- Extreme fatigue or difficulty with everyday activities
- Lack of appetite, nausea
- Memory loss and disorientation
- Increased heart rate



Take care of your heart!

If you have congestive heart failure, get valuable support at Advocate Bethany Hospital's **Free Congestive Heart Failure Support Group** Last Tuesday of each month, **11 a.m. to noon**

Registration is recommended. Call us today!