

A ray of hope



Diane Norton, ARNP
MercyCare Johnson Avenue

Three years ago Connie Mead was in so much pain and respiratory distress that she couldn't attend her grandchildren's ball games or family events. She was withdrawn, inactive and spent 10-12 days in the hospital every other month. That was her life before Mercy Home Care and telemonitoring.

Today, Connie has a new lease on life. She is 71 pounds lighter, more active and hasn't been to the hospital since December 2009. She gives high praise and credit to her Home Care nurse and her daily at-home accountability partner – a telemonitoring machine.

Telemonitoring allows physicians and nurses to closely monitor patients' medical conditions while patients are in the comfort of their own homes. Connie's medical conditions include chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), asthma, congestive heart failure (CHF) and diabetes.

Each morning Connie checks her vitals – weight, blood pressure, heart rate, oxygen level and glucose reading – all in a matter of minutes with the telemonitor. The data is immediately transmitted to Mercy Home Care, allowing nurses to monitor changes in vital signs and, if necessary, take action to contact the patient or

make a home visit. Patient results also may be printed or faxed to a physician's office.

"Before Mercy Home Care, I wasn't doing anything. I was so bad – and I didn't care," says Connie. "I hurt so bad everywhere that it was more than I could handle and I got depressed. Having Mercy Home Care changed my attitude. Now I know someone cares about me."

When Connie's primary healthcare provider, Diane Norton, ARNP, MercyCare Johnson Avenue, first suggested Mercy Home Care and telemonitoring, Connie had no idea what it was – or how much it would change her life. In the beginning, a physical therapist came to help her get her muscles moving again, a dietitian helped improve her nutrition, and a Home Care nurse conducted an assessment and set her up with the telemonitor. Shawn Atay, RN, Mercy's Home Care Telemonitoring Coordinator, continues to follow up with Connie.



For more information about Home Care, visit www.mercycare.org/home-care.

"Telemonitoring plays an integral role in disease management, allowing early detection and prompt treatment of patients with unstable conditions," says Shawn. "It translates to better outcomes and avoids ER visits and hospital admissions."

Each patient has customized vital sign parameters established prior to installation. The equipment also verbally prompts the patient with specific questions each day to gauge any changes in the patient's condition. Connie notes, "Sometimes I feel bad – but I don't know how bad until I get on the telemonitor. It's my

security blanket."

"If a reading is out of whack, I fax the results to Diane Norton for her review," explains Shawn. Then Connie receives either a home visit from Shawn or is asked to come to Diane Norton's office.

While Connie values the machine, she appreciates Shawn's home visits even more, saying, "It's a pleasure to have Shawn come. I call her my 'Miss Sunshine.' I think of her as a friend."

And, Shawn is Connie's biggest cheerleader. Their next game plan is to tackle more weight loss for Connie to gain even greater health rewards.

"It's a pleasure to have Shawn come. I call her my 'Miss Sunshine.'"

*Connie Mead
Home Care patient*