**When to call the doctor....** Every exercise session at Cardiac Therapy Foundation starts with members lining up for blood pressure readings and a “bit” of conversation with the nurses. Although not readily apparent, the nurses “triage” (observe, listen to symptoms, and evaluate for possible interventions/treatments) each and every individual they encounter. Sometimes, individuals require immediate care as symptoms betray a possible serious development. Most times, individuals describe symptoms that have already occurred or occurred “over the weekend”. Unfortunately, waiting for CTF nurses’ triage and delaying medical attention can lead to dangerous consequences. Even if symptoms do not warrant immediate attention, sometimes it’s best to stay at home. But how does one know? Here are some guidelines to consider:

Stay at home when you have….

1) A respiratory infection, especially the first 48 hours. If coughing, sputum should be thin, clear, or white before returning.
2) Nausea or vomiting (48 hours for recovery---dehydration from either of these symptoms can cause low blood pressure and dizziness can result.)
3) Fever (at least 48 hours for recovery for the same reason as above)
4) Increased fatigue due to lack of sleep or over-exertion
5) Pain in any joints or muscles rated at over 5/10

Call your physician BEFORE you come to CTF when you experience…

1) Overwhelming fatigue, not associated with sleeplessness or over-exertion
2) Chest discomfort that is unusual or increasing in duration or intensity
3) A respiratory infection or cough that worsens---if the sputum is thick, green, or rust colored, DO NOT COME TO CTF;
4) Difficulty breathing
5) Constant dizziness or lightheadedness
6) New, irregular heart rate
7) Any frank bleeding
8) Unrelenting pain rated at over 5/10
9) Weight gain of more than 3-5 pounds in 2-5 days

And lastly, call 911 when the following occurs:

1) New chest pain or discomfort that is severe, unexpected, and occurs with shortness of breath, sweating, nausea, or weakness
2) Very fast heart rate (over 120 beats per minute) especially if short of breath
3) Unexpected shortness of breath NOT relieved by rest
4) Sudden, severe headache
5) Sudden weakness or paralysis (inability to move) in arms or legs
6) Fainting spell with loss of consciousness

Remember, the outstanding nurses at Cardiac Therapy Foundation are well-prepared to meet any unexpected emergencies.