

TREAT HEART DISEASE

Taking your heart medicines





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Taking Your Heart Medicines

For people living with heart disease and their caregivers

Read this booklet to know:

- How different heart medicines work
- Common medicine names
- Common side effects

Table of Contents

Introduction to Heart Medicines	1
Types of Heart Medicines.....	3
Anticoagulants ('blood thinners').....	3
Antiplatelet agents ('blood thinners').....	4
Angiotensin converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors.....	5
Angiotensin 2 receptor blockers (ARB)	6
Beta blockers	7
Calcium channel blockers.....	8
Diuretics (water pills)	9
Nitrates.....	10
Cholesterol lowering medicines.....	11
– Statins.....	11
– PCSK9 inhibitors.....	13
– Fibrates	14
Combined Medicines.....	15
Track Your Heart Medicines	17
Where to Learn More.....	19

Introduction to Heart Medicines

What do heart medicines do?

Your heart medicines are important for your health. When you take your medicines as prescribed by your doctor, they help reduce the chance that you will have another heart event. You may need to take some of your heart medicines for the rest of your life.

Your heart medicines help:

- Prevent blood clots forming
- Lower your blood pressure
- Lower the amount of work your heart has to do
- Improve blood flow to your heart
- Relieve angina symptoms
- Lower your LDL (bad) cholesterol
- Raise your HDL (good) cholesterol
- Lower your triglycerides (a type of fat in your blood)

Your doctor and pharmacist will work with you to ensure your medicines are working for you. They will check your medicines over time to ensure they still work for you.

Types of Heart Medicines

This section will provide information about your medicines. You will need the name of your heart medicine(s) for this section. There are many types of heart medicines. Each type is unique and works in its own way within your body.

The University Health Network Cardiovascular Prevention & Rehabilitation Program does not promote one type of medicine over another. Brand names of heart medicines are listed to provide you with examples. The information listed is for education purposes only.

Talk to your doctor and pharmacist to find the right medicine(s) for you.

Anticoagulants ('blood thinners')

What is an anticoagulant?

This medicine helps prevent harmful clots forming in the blood vessels.

Common names:

- Warfarin (Coumadin®)
- Heparin (in hospital)
- Dabigatran (Pradaxa®)
- Rivaroxaban (Xarelto®)
- Endoxaban (Lixiana®)
- Apixaban (Eliquis®)

How does this medicine help manage my heart disease?

It is often prescribed to lower the risk of stroke in patients with artificial heart valves or atrial fibrillation.

What are some common side effects of this medicine?

Some common side effects are:

- Nosebleeds
- Easy bruising or bleeding (gums)
- Small risk of major bleeding (stomach or brain)

What should I know about taking this medicine?

If this medicine (such as Warfarin/Coumadin) is new, your doctor will send you for weekly or monthly blood tests (INR test) to ensure you are taking the correct doses. Foods rich in vitamin K may interfere with these drugs, including green leafy vegetables. Avoid sudden changes in the amount you eat each day.

You do not need to get blood tests (INR test) if you take: Dabigatran (Pradaxa®), Rivaroxaban (Xarelto®), Endoxaban (Lixiana®) or Apixaban (Eliquis®).

Antiplatelet agents ('blood thinners')

What is an antiplatelet agent?

This medicine prevents the blood platelets (cells) from sticking together and forming clots.

Some common names are:

- Acetylsalicylic acid, ASA (Aspirin)
- Clopidogrel (Plavix®)
- Ticagrelor (Brilinta®)
- Prasugrel (Effient®)

How does this medicine help manage my heart disease?

This medicine is used to reduce the risk of dangerous blood clots forming in the body that may cause a heart attack or stroke. May be prescribed for patients who are at risk of having a heart attack.

What are some common side effects of this medicine?

Some common side effects are:

- Easy bruising, nausea (upset stomach)
- Vertigo, ringing in ears (tinnitus), light-headedness
- Abdominal pain, bleeding ulcers (black tarry stool)
- Impaired kidney or liver function
- Shortness of breath with Ticagrelor (Brilinta®)

Angiotensin converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors

What is an ACE inhibitor?

This medicine expands (opens up) blood vessels to lower blood pressure and improve the amount of blood the heart pumps.

Some common names are:

- Ramipril (Altace®)
- Enalapril (Vasotec®)
- Quinapril (Accupril®)
- Fosinopril (Monopril®)
- Trandolapril (Mavik®)
- Perindopril (Coversyl®, Aceon®)
- Lisinopril (Prinivil®, Zestril®)

How does this medicine help manage my heart disease?

This medicine may prevent further damage to the heart muscle after a heart attack. It is prescribed for patients with high blood pressure or heart failure.

What are some common side effects of this medicine?

Some common side effects for this medicine are:

- Dry cough (very common)
- Rapid swelling of the lips or face
- Low blood pressure
- Dizziness
- Nausea
- Headache

Angiotensin 2 receptor blockers (ARB)

What is an angiotensin 2 receptor blocker?

This medicine keeps blood vessels relaxed, which increases the supply of blood and oxygen to the heart muscle and prevents blood pressure from rising.

Some common names are:

- Losartan (Cozaar®)
- Telmisartan (Micardis®)
- Irbesartan (Avapro®)
- Candesartan (Atacand®)
- Valsartan (Diovan®)

How does this medicine help manage my heart disease?

Prescribed for patients with signs and symptoms of high blood pressure and heart failure. Prescribed when ACE inhibitors are not tolerated.

What are some common side effects of this medicine?

Some common side effects are:

- Nausea
- Headaches
- Low blood pressure (dizziness)

Beta blockers

What is a beta blocker?

This medicine lowers blood pressure and makes the heart beat more slowly and with less force.

Some common names are:

- Atenolol (Tenormin[®])
- Bisoprolol (Monacor[®])
- Metoprolol (Lopressor[®], Betaloc[®], Toprol XL[®])
- Carvedilol (Coreg[®])
- Acebutolol (Monitan[®], Sectral[®])
- Timolol (Blocadren[®])
- Nadolol (Corgard[®])

How does this medicine help manage my heart disease?

This medicine lowers blood pressure and heart rate. It will help reduce the chance of another heart attack or having angina (chest pain). It is prescribed for patients with abnormally fast heart rates (tachycardia) and irregular rhythms.

What are some common side effects of this medicine?

Some common side effects are:

- Slow heart rate
- Low blood pressure
- Dizziness, headaches
- Worsening of asthma symptoms
- Masks signs of hypoglycemia (low blood sugar)
- Depression
- Sleep disturbance (nightmares)
- Sexual dysfunction (impotence)
- Lack of energy, fatigue

Calcium channel blockers

What is a calcium channel blocker?

This medicine relaxes (opens up) blood vessels to improve blood flow to the heart.

Some common names are:

- Amlodipine (Norvasc[®], Lotrel[®])
- Diltiazem (Cardizem[®], Tiazac[®])

- Felodipine (Plendil®)
- Nifedipine (Adalat®, Procardia®)

How does this medicine help manage my heart disease?

This medicine helps:

- Control high blood pressure
- Control irregular heartbeats
- Reduce angina (chest pain)

What are some common side effects of this medicine?

Some common side effects are:

- Facial flushing
- Edema (ankle swelling)
- Headache, nausea, dizziness

Diuretics (water pills)

What is a diuretic?

This medicine helps the body to get rid of extra fluid.

Some common names are:

- Spironolactone (Aldactone®)
- Furosemide (Lasix®)
- Hydrochlorothiazide (HCTZ)
- Chlorothiazide (Diuril®)
- Indapamide (Lozol®, Lozide®)

How does this medicine help manage my heart disease?

This medicine lowers the amount of work the heart has to do. This medicine helps to manage high blood pressure and heart failure. This medicine helps reduce extra fluid buildup in the lungs, lower legs and ankles.

What are some common side effects of this medicine?

Some common side effects are:

- Low blood pressure
- Electrolyte imbalance (low potassium, low magnesium, low sodium)

What should I know about taking this medicine?

Take this pill in the morning. It will cause many trips to the bathroom during the day, but will help to avoid disruption to your sleep at night. You may experience ringing in your ears if you take a high dose of this medicine.

Nitrates

What is a nitrate?

This medicine relaxes (opens up) blood vessels to improve blood flow (and oxygen) to the heart.

Some common names are:

- Nitroglycerin sublingual or (Nitrostat[®])
- Nitro patch (Nitrodur[®], Transderm-Nitro[®])
- Nitroglycerin sublingual* spray or (Nitrolingual pump spray)
- Nitropaste (Nitrol[®])
- Hydralazine (Apresoline[®])
- Isosorbide dinitrate (Isordil[®])

This medicine is available in pills, spray, patches.

*sublingual means under the tongue

How does this medicine help manage my heart disease?

This medicine helps relieve angina symptoms (chest pain).

What are some common side effects of this medicine?

Some common side effects are:

- Fainting or dizziness when sitting up or standing up too quickly
- Low blood pressure
- Headaches
- Flushing

CHOLESTEROL LOWERING MEDICINES

Statins

What is a statin medicine?

This medicine prevents the liver from producing too much cholesterol.

Some common names are:

- Rosuvastatin (Crestor®)
- Pravastatin (Pravachol®, Pravigard®)
- Simvastatin (Zocor®)
- Atorvastatin (Lipitor®)
- Lovastatin (Mevacor®)

How does this medicine help manage my heart disease?

This medicine is prescribed for patients with high cholesterol at risk of heart disease, stroke or diabetes.

It helps:

- Lower LDL (bad) cholesterol
- Raise HDL (good) cholesterol
- Lower triglyceride (TG) levels

What are some common side effects of this medicine?

Some common side effects are:

- Muscle pain
- Muscle weakness
- Abnormal liver function
- Allergic reaction (skin rashes)
- Heartburn
- Dizziness

What should I know about taking this medicine?

Increased muscle pain and weakness can be a sign of a serious side effect and should be reported to your physician immediately.

PCSK9 inhibitors

What is a PCSK9 medicine?

This medicine works inside the intestine and lowers the body's supply of cholesterol.

Some common names are:

- Evolocumab (Repatha®)
- Alirocumab (Praluent®)

How does this medicine help manage my heart disease?

Prescribed for patients with high cholesterol or those at risk for heart disease, stroke or diabetes.

What are some common side effects of this medicine?

Some common side effects are:

- Redness, itching, swelling or pain/tenderness at injection site
- Symptoms of the common cold and flu or flu-like symptoms

What should I know about taking this medicine?

This medicine is injected into the body (self-injection) 1 to 2 times each month.

Fibrates

What is a fibrate?

This medicine blocks the production of certain types of cholesterol. It also increases production of HDL (good) cholesterol.

Some common names are:

- Fenofibrate (Lipidil®)
- Bezafibrate (Bezalip®)
- Gemfibrozil (Lopid®)

How does this medicine help manage my heart disease?

Prescribed for patients with high LDL (bad) cholesterol and triglycerides and low HDL (good) cholesterol.

What are some common side effects of this medicine?

Some common side effects are:

- Stomach pain
- Gas
- Heartburn

Combined Medicines

Some people may be prescribed combination drugs containing two different cardiac medicines.

Some examples of the commonly prescribed medicines are:

Adalat XLPlus®

Which contains:

- Nifedipine (calcium channel blocker)
- Acetylsalicylic Acid, ASA or Aspirin (anti-platelet)

Coversyl Plus®

Which contains:

- Perindopril (angiotensin converting enzyme inhibitor)
- Indapamide (diuretic)

Caduet®

Which contains:

- Amlodipine (calcium channel blocker)
- Lipitor (cholesterol lowering)

Hyzaar®

Which contains:

- Cozaar (angiotensin 2 receptor blocker)
- Hydrochlorothiazide (water pill)

Atacand HCT®

Which contains:

- Atacand (angiotensin 2 receptor antagonist)
- Hydrochlorothiazide (water pill)

Entresto™

Which contains:

- Sacubitril (enzyme inhibitor)
- Valsartan (angiotensin 2 receptor blocker)

Track Your Heart Medicines

It is important to keep track of your heart medicines. Fill out the chart below and take it with you to all of your medical appointments. Your pharmacist can help you fill out this tool.

Class of medicine	Name of your medicine	How much you take (dosage)	When you take it (when, how often)
Blood thinners: anti-coagulants or anti-platelets			
ACE inhibitors			
Angiotensin 2 receptor blockers			
Beta blockers			
Calcium channel blockers			
Diuretic (water pill)			
Nitrates			
Cholesterol (statins)			
Other medicines			

Where to Learn More

MedsCheck program

If you live in Ontario, your local pharmacist can help you with this.

www.health.gov.on.ca/en/public/programs/drugs/medscheck/

Contact INFOline:

1-866-255-6701

1-866-255-6701

TTY 1-800-387-5599

Cardiac College

www.cardiaccollege.ca

The Heart and Stroke Foundation

www.heartandstroke.ca

Home —> Heart —> Treatments —> Medications

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