

Know Your Medicines

Heart Failure



The Know Your Medicine brochure series includes:

Cholesterol
Depression
Diabetes (Type 2)
Heart Failure
High Blood Pressure
Osteoporosis

The ElderCare Patient Education series includes:

Aging and Your Response to Medicines
Alcohol: Friend or Foe?
The Caregiver's Guide to Using Medicine
Choosing the Right Nonprescription Medicine
The Consumer's Quick Reference to Using Medicines
Eye Medicines: May Be More Than Meets the Eye
Home Safety Issues
How to Select Your Pharmacy and Pharmacist
Medicines and Travel
Personal Medicine Record
Questions You May Have About Generic Medicines
Vitamins Are Not Enough



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Side Effects

Some patients taking diuretics develop symptoms of potassium deficiency: muscle cramps and, sometimes, disturbances in heart rhythm. Your doctor may prescribe potassium supplements.

If taking a diuretic in the evening causes the inconvenience of waking up at night to go to the bathroom, ask your doctor if you can take your medicine in the morning.

If your dose is too large, you may experience lightheadedness or dizziness, especially when standing up.

Digoxin (Lanoxin)

By helping your heart get more blood to your muscles, digoxin can increase the amount of activity you can endure before feeling fatigued or short of breath.

Side Effects

Side effects often include loss of appetite, nausea, or vomiting. Some patients experience visual irregularities, such as the appearance of yellow or green “halos.” These side effects can often be reduced by working with your doctor to find a better dose.

Taking Responsibility for Your Health

- Stick with your medicine regimen.
- Exercise moderately.
- Be careful exercising and know your limits.
- Consult your doctor before exercising.
- Don't smoke.



- Shortness of breath can often be relieved by propping yourself up with pillows or even sleeping upright.
- Watch your weight, but consult your doctor before starting a diet.
- Eat a low-salt diet (fewer than 3 grams of salt a day).

- Check the sodium content of canned and prepared foods.
- Eat a variety of fresh vegetables and meats.
- Avoid snack foods and fast-food.
- Limit your alcohol consumption and beware of medicines that interact with alcohol.



- Get flu and pneumonia shots before winter.
- Consult your doctor or pharmacist before taking any over-the-counter medicine, vitamin, or supplement.
- Avoid potentially harmful over-the-counter medicines, such as

anti-inflammatory drugs
(Motrin, Advil, and others)

cold medicines
(Contac, Dristan, and others).

Generic Name	Brand Name
atenolol	Tenormin
carvedilol	Coreg
metoprolol	Lopressor and Toprol XL

Side Effects

Beta-blockers can cause fatigue, sleep disturbances, and sexual dysfunction.

Diuretics

By helping your kidneys expel sodium and water, diuretics can reduce swelling in your legs and chest and fluid in your lungs.

Generic Name	Brand Name
bumetanide	Bumex
furosemide	Lasix
toremide	Demadex
hydrochlorothiazide	Hydrodiuril and Microzide
chlorthalidone	Hygroton
chlorothiazide	Diuril
indapamide	Lozol
triamterene/ hydrochlorothiazide	Dyazide and Maxzide
spironolactone	Aldactone
metolazone	Zaroxolyn

Generic Name	Brand Name
benazepril	Lotensin
captopril	Capoten
enalapril	Vasotec
fosinopril	Monopril
lisinopril	Prinivil and Zestril
moexipril	Univasc
perindopril	Aceon
quinapril	Accupril
ramipril	Altace
trandolapril	Mavik

Side Effects

ACE inhibitors usually have few side effects, but they can include a dry cough or a rash. Other, less frequent side effects include light-headedness or dizziness and, rarely, swelling of the throat.

Beta-Blockers

These medicines are also used to treat high blood pressure and to increase your ability to exercise. They can help you live longer, and if you've had a heart attack, they can reduce your chances of having a second one. Like ACE inhibitors, it can take time for you and your doctor to find the best dose and for you to start feeling better.



- Monitor any conditions you have, such as
high blood pressure
high cholesterol
diabetes.

Monitoring Your Condition

There are several ways you can monitor your condition:

- Weigh yourself daily. If you gain 3 or 4 pounds over a couple days, it may mean that you are retaining fluid and need a change in your medicine.
- Note your activity level: how far you can walk, how many stairs you can climb before feeling fatigued or short of breath.
- Onset of chest discomfort or an increase in the frequency of chest discomfort could indicate your condition is worsening.
- See your doctor, nurse and pharmacist regularly so they can watch for early warning signs of any change in your condition.

When Taking Your Medicine...

ALWAYS

- Take your medicine exactly the way your doctor prescribes it—no more and no less.
- Tell your doctor or pharmacist about any allergies you have. It also is important to tell them about any problems you have had with medicines in the past, such as rashes, indigestion, dizziness, or not feeling hungry.
- Keep a daily record of all the medicines you take. Include prescription and over-the-counter medicines. Write down the name of each medicine, the doctor who prescribed it, the amount you take, and the times of day you take it. Keep a copy in your medicine cabinet and one in your wallet or pocketbook.
- Review your medicine record with your doctor during every visit, especially if your doctor prescribes new medicine. Your doctor may have updated information about the medicines you are taking.
- Check the expiration dates on your medicine bottles. If your medicine has expired, throw it away.

What Are the Symptoms?

- Shortness of breath while active
- Shortness of breath while lying down
- Waking up short of breath
- Chest discomfort
- Cough
- Fatigue
- Swelling in the ankles and legs

Which Medicines Help?

Your doctor may prescribe several types of medicines. They may not relieve all of your symptoms, but they can reduce the risk of being hospitalized, improve your quality of life, and help you live longer.

ACE Inhibitors

ACE inhibitors make it easier for your heart to work. Your doctor may start with a low dose, then gradually increase the dose until you have the greatest benefit from the medicine. It may take a while for you to feel relief from some of your symptoms. But once you and your doctor find the right dose, you may be able to resume your normal activities and lead a more active life.

What Is Heart Failure?

Heart failure occurs when your heart isn't strong enough to pump blood to your muscles and vital organs, particularly your kidneys. If they don't get enough blood, your body starts to compensate in ways a doctor needs to monitor.

Heart failure, often caused by heart attacks, heart disease, and high blood pressure, is a common diagnosis more than half a million people receive every year. But by working closely with your doctor and pharmacist, understanding your treatment, and making lifestyle changes, you can prevent further damage and feel better.



- Call your doctor immediately if you have any problems with your medicines.
- Make sure you received the correct medicine before you leave the pharmacy. If not, notify the pharmacist.
- Make sure you can read and understand the medicine name and directions on the container. If the label is hard to read, ask your pharmacist to use large type. If you have difficulty opening the bottle, tell your pharmacist.

DO NOT

- Stop taking a prescription drug unless your doctor says it's OK—even if you are feeling better. If you are worried that the drug might be doing more harm than good, talk with your doctor. He or she may be able to change your medicine to another one that will work just as well.
- Take more or less than the prescribed amount of any drug
- Mix alcohol and medicine unless your doctor says it's OK. Alcohol can affect how well a medicine works. Mixing alcohol and medicine can even make you sick.
- Take medicine prescribed for another person or give your medicine to someone else.