Medicines for Heart Disease

There are many medicines to treat heart disease. Ask your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist if you have questions about your medicines.

- Take medicines as directed.
- **Do NOT stop taking your medicines because you feel better or because you have no more refills on the prescription.** Check with your doctor before you stop taking any medicine. Many heart medicines will need to be taken long term.
- Tell your doctor or nurse if you are taking any over the counter medicines or herbal supplements. They may interact with medicines.
- Talk with your doctor or nurse if you have side effects from your medicines. Side effects are an unwanted effect of a drug.

**Anti-platelets**

These medicines prevent platelets in the blood from clumping or clotting. These medicines are often used after a heart attack or stroke, or after stent procedures to prevent platelets from blocking the stent.

**Do not stop taking this medicine without talking to the doctor who ordered it.** Stopping your anti-platelet medicine puts you at risk for forming clots or for the stent to get blocked.

**Side effects may include:** allergic reaction, black, bloody or tarry stools, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, skin bruising, dizziness, confusion, hallucinations, loss of hearing, or ringing in ears.

**Medicine names:**
- aspirin (Bayer, Bufferin, Ecotrin, St. Joseph’s or other generic brands)
- clopidogrel (Plavix)
- prasugrel (Effient)
- ticagrelor (Brilinta)

**Beta blockers**

Beta blockers improve the heart’s ability to relax and block the effect of other hormones in the body (adrenaline/norepinephrine). They slow the heart rate and help control blood pressure. These medicines are used to treat high blood pressure, heart failure, angina (chest pain), and may be used after heart attack.

**Side effects may include:** dizziness, slow heart rate, fatigue, shortness of breath when first starting medicine, and sexual dysfunction.

**Medicine names:**
- carvedilol (Coreg)
- atenolol (Tenormin)
- metoprolol (Toprol-XL, Lopressor)
- propanolol (Inderal)
- bisoprolol (Zebeta)
- Other ____________________________
**Angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors**

ACE inhibitors widen the blood vessels and help increase blood flow by blocking the production of a hormone in your body that tightens blood vessels. They help lower blood pressure, lessen the amount of work the heart needs to do, and protect the kidneys. These medicines are used to treat high blood pressure, heart failure, and may be used after heart attack.

**Side effects may include:** dizziness, weakness, cough, and decreased ability to taste. **If you have swelling throughout face, tongue, or lips, stop taking the medicine right away and call your doctor.**

**Medicine names:**
- benazepril (Lotensin)
- captopril (Capoten)
- enalapril (Vasotec)
- lisinopril (Prinivil, Zestril)
- ramipril (Altace)
- other ______________________

**Angiotensin II receptor blockers (ARB)**

ARBs widen the blood vessels and help increase blood flow when a person cannot take an ACE inhibitor. They work like ACE inhibitors by blocking a hormone in your body. These medicines are used to treat high blood pressure, heart failure, and may be used after heart attack.

**Side effects may include:** dizziness and weakness. **If you have swelling throughout face, tongue, or lips, stop taking the medicine right away and call your doctor.**

**Medicine names:**
- atorvastatin (Lipitor)
- lovastatin (Mevacor)
- pravastatin (Pravachol)
- rosuvastatin (Crestor)
- simvastatin (Zocor)
- other ______________________

**Statins (HMG-CoA Reductase inhibitors)**

Statins block the production of cholesterol in the liver. This lowers total cholesterol and bad LDL cholesterol levels, but raises good HDL cholesterol levels. High levels of bad cholesterol in the body increase the risk of heart disease.

Your cholesterol levels should be checked with blood tests 1 to 2 times each year.

**Side effects may include:** muscle weakness or pain, elevated liver enzymes, and upset stomach.

Your doctor will check your liver function with a blood test before starting a statin. You should also have liver function testing done if you have signs of liver problems while taking a statin, such as feeling very weak or tired, loss of appetite, upper belly pain, dark urine, yellowing of your skin, or the whites of your eyes.

**Medicine names:**
- candesartan (Atacand)
- losartan (Cozaar)
- valsartan (Diovan)
- other ______________________
Nitrates

These medicines help relax the blood vessels, so blood flows more easily through the body. They open the coronary blood vessels, so more oxygen is supplied to the heart. These medicines are used to treat angina (chest pain) and may be used for heart failure.

**Side effects may include:** headache, dizziness, light-headedness, flushing of face, or neck, and skin rash.

**Medicine names:**
Nitroglycerin, also called nitro, may be given to patients who have chest discomfort (angina) due to coronary artery disease (CAD). The blood vessels widen to allow for better blood flow to the heart.

- **Sublingual nitro tablets or spray**
  - You may feel tingling or a headache when you take nitro.
  - Keep your nitro tablets or spray with you at all times.
  - Keep nitro bottle out of moist areas, such as the bathroom.
  - Check the expiration date and be sure to throw the medicine away after the expiration date. Keep refills up to date.

**Use sublingual nitro tablets or spray if you have chest pain:**

1. Sit down and rest before using nitroglycerin.
2. If you have nitroglycerin tablets, put one tablet under your tongue and let it dissolve. **Do not swallow the tablet.** If you use nitroglycerin spray, spray it into your mouth towards the back of your throat.
3. Rest and wait 5 minutes. Take a second tablet under your tongue if you still have chest discomfort or pain or use the spray. **At any time if your chest discomfort or pain does not improve or is getting worse even with nitroglycerin, call 911 and seek emergency treatment. Do not drive yourself to the hospital because you may be having a heart attack.**
4. Rest and wait another 5 minutes. Take a third tablet under your tongue or use your spray if the chest discomfort or pain has not gone away.
5. If you have taken 3 tablets or sprays and your chest discomfort or pain is still present after 15 minutes, **call 911 and seek emergency treatment.**

There are other nitrate medicines that are used to decrease chest pain, but **should NOT be used for a sudden attack.** These medicines include:

- **Nitroglycerin patch (Nitro-dur, Minitrin, Transderm-nitro)** – place on non-hairy skin and rotate sites.
- **Isosorbide dinitrate (Isordil)** - short acting
- **Isosorbide mononitrate (Imdur)** - long acting

Diuretics

Diuretics, or water pills, remove excess sodium (salt) and water from your body by increasing the flow of urine. Your heart can work better, and you may breath easier when the extra fluid is removed from your body. These medicines are used to treat high blood pressure, heart failure, and fluid build up in lungs, feet, or hands.

**Side effects may include:** dizziness, weakness, muscle cramps, dry mouth, and increased thirst.
Other medicines for your heart

- **Amiodarone (Cordarone)**
  Slows the heart rate to allow the heart’s electrical system to beat normally. Used to treat irregular heart rhythms, such as atrial fibrillation or ventricular tachycardia.

  **Side effects may include:** slow heart rate, palpitations, fatigue, headache, dizziness, nausea, vomiting, unusual taste in the mouth, stomach pain, constipation or diarrhea, difficulty breathing, rash, and vision problems.

- **Digoxin (Lanoxin)**
  Digoxin can strengthen the heart muscle, so it pumps better. It also helps control the rate of your heart. It is used to treat heart failure and atrial fibrillation.

  Digoxin may build up in your body, causing the amount of the drug in your blood to be higher than normal. Your doctor may order a blood test to check your level.

  **Side effects may include:** loss of appetite, nausea and vomiting, diarrhea, frequent headaches, changes in vision, and skipped or slow heart beats.

Other over the counter medicines

Check with your doctor or pharmacist before starting any new medicines, whether prescription or over the counter. There are some over the counter medicines that may cause side effects that can impact your heart condition.

- **Acetaminophen (Tylenol)**
  Used for pain, fever, colds, muscle soreness, headache, arthritis, back aches, and toothaches.
Avoid alcohol when taking acetaminophen because it may cause liver damage.

**Side effects may include:** allergic reaction, unusual bleeding or bruising, liver damage, fatigue, nausea, vomiting, and abdominal pain.

- **Cold and sinus medicines**
  For upper respiratory congestion, sneezing, or sniffles. These medicines can cause increased blood pressure.
  - Pseudoephedrine, found in Actifed Cold and Sinus, Advil Cold and Sinus, Benadryl-D, Drixoral Cold and Allergy, Sudafed Sinus, Mucinex-D, Zyrtec-D, and Claritin-D.
  - Phenylephrine, found mostly in inhalers or sprays, like Dristan Advanced Formula, Neo-Synephrine, Nostril, Rhinall, Sinex, and Sudafed PE.
  - Epinephrine, found mostly in inhalers or sprays, like Primatene Mist.

- **Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs)** such as:
  - Ibuprofen, also known as Advil, Ibuf-Tab, Midol IB, Motrin, Nuprin, and Rufen
  - Naproxen sodium also known as Aleve

Patients with a history of heart failure, heart attack, stroke, or stent in their heart should avoid use of ibuprofen or naproxen sodium because it may increase the risk of another heart attack or stroke.

Work by reducing the hormones that cause pain and inflammation in the body. Used to treat pain, fever, inflammation, stiffness, some types of arthritis, and menstrual cramps.

**Side effects may include:** allergic reaction, increase blood pressure, unusual bleeding or bruising, black, bloody or tarry stools, loss of hearing or ringing in the ears, headache, dizziness, nausea, vomiting, muscle cramps, numbness or tingling, and stomach problems.

**Remember**
- Take your medicines as directed by your doctor. Do not stop any of these medicines because you are feeling better.
- Please tell your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist if you are taking any over the counter medicines, vitamins, or herbal products since they may interact with your heart medicines.