

HEART FAILURE AND MEDICATIONS

JOHN MUIR HEALTH



- *General Medication Information*
- *Common Heart Failure Medications*
 - Angiotensin-Converting Enzyme (ACE) Inhibitors*
 - Angiotensin II Receptor Blockers (ARB)*
 - Beta Blocking Agents*
 - Carvedilol*
 - Diuretics “Water Pills”*
 - Potassium Sparing Diuretics / Aldosterone Receptor Antagonist*
 - Digoxin*
 - Platelet Inhibitors (Aspirin)*
 - Isosorbide*
 - Hydralazine*
- *Other Heart Related Medications*
 - Cholesterol Lowering Agents*
 - Antiarrhythmics (Amiodarone)*
 - Anticoagulants “Blood Thinners” (Warfarin)*
 - Nitroglycerin Sublingual Tablets and Spray*
- *Medication Record*

INTRODUCTION

Medicines are important in the treatment of heart failure. However, these medications are not cures. Management of heart failure requires life long therapy. Continue to take your medication even if you feel better.

If you are not taking an ACE INHIBITOR, DIURETIC, BETA BLOCKER or ASPIRIN ask you doctor if you should be.

GENERAL MEDICATION INFORMATION

- It may take weeks or even months for some symptoms to improve. Take your medication regularly as prescribed.
- Tell your physician and pharmacist which prescription and non-prescription medications you take including vitamins, herbal preparations and any samples given to you by another physician.

HEART FAILURE AND MEDICATIONS

GENERAL MEDICATION INFORMATION (continued)

- **Tell your physician and pharmacist if you are allergic to any medications.**
- Fill all your prescriptions at the same pharmacy so you have a complete medication history at one location.
- Some medications used in treating heart failure may also be used to control blood pressure, irregular heartbeats or some other medical condition. Take your medications for heart failure as directed by your physician even if you do not have any of these other conditions.
- Ask questions of your physician and pharmacist. Make sure you understand what the medication is for, how to take it and the side effects to watch for.
- Make a list of your medications including the dose (mg, gm) and how often you take it. Keep a copy of the list with you and another copy by the phone at home.
- If you have been in the hospital, check with your physician before going home so you know which of your home medications to continue taking including antibiotics, hormone replacement therapy and antidepressants.
- Organize your pills in a divided pillbox to keep track of each dose taken. Keep remaining medication in the container it came in, tightly closed and out of the reach of children.
- Store medications at room temperature away from excessive heat and moisture. Do not store in the bathroom.
- Throw away any medication that is outdated or no longer needed or store in a separate area away from current medications.
- Avoid hazardous activity such as driving until you know how your body will react to a new medication. Side effects not listed on your information sheet may occur. If you notice any changes with your body after starting a new medication contact your doctor.
- Take a missed dose as soon as you remember it. However, if it is almost time for the next dose, skip the missed dose and continue your regular dosing schedule. Do not take a double dose to make up for a missed one.
- Let your physician know if you are pregnant or are breast-feeding.
- Refill your medication when you are down to a 1-2 week supply.

HEART FAILURE AND MEDICATIONS

COMMON HEART FAILURE MEDICATIONS

These medications are shown to improve heart function, help you live longer or feel better.

Angiotensin-Converting Enzyme (ACE) Inhibitors

- Benazepril (Lotensin)
- Captopril (Capoten)
- Enalapril (Vasotec)
- Fosinopril (Monopril)
- Lisinopril (Prinivil, Zestril)
- Moexipril (Univasc)
- Perindopril (Aceaon)
- Quinapril (Accupril)
- Ramipril (Altace)
- Trandolopril (Mavik)

DESCRIPTION:

ACE Inhibitors block a chemical in the blood that is necessary to produce Angiotensin II. Angiotensin II makes the blood vessels constrict or tighten and causes your body to retain sodium (salt) and water. By preventing the formation of Angiotensin II, the ACE Inhibitors decrease the resistance in the blood vessels, thereby lowering blood pressure and decreasing the workload of the heart. They are used to treat heart failure and high blood pressure. They help slow down the weakening of the heart muscle after a heart attack. ACE inhibitors are proven to prolong the life of those with heart failure.

PROPER USE:

- Take as directed by your physician.
- Do not double the dose or adjust the dosing on your own.
- Continue to take your ACE Inhibitor even if you feel well.
- Do not take within two hours of antacids.

PRECAUTIONS:

- Let your physician know if you have diabetes or any kidney problems.
- Fainting may occur with vigorous exercise, especially in warm weather.
- Check with your physician about using alcohol.
- These medications may cause an increase in potassium in your body. Signs of too much potassium in your body include irregular heartbeat, nervousness, tiredness, shortness of breath and tingling in the hands, feet or lips.
- Do not use ACE Inhibitors if you are pregnant.

HEART FAILURE AND MEDICATIONS

Angiotensin-Converting Enzyme (ACE) Inhibitors (continued)

DIETARY INSTRUCTIONS:

- Take Captopril and Moexipril on an empty stomach. The other ACE Inhibitors may be taken with food if they upset your stomach.
- Check with your physician before using a salt substitute. These often contain potassium.
- Follow your physician's instructions regarding salt in your diet.

SIDE EFFECTS:

- Dry cough without sputum.
- Itching, dizziness, photosensitivity, nausea, diarrhea, vomiting, headache, metallic or salty taste.
- **Contact your physician immediately** if you experience fainting, fever, chills, rash, swelling of the face, lips, tongue or hands, difficulty breathing or swallowing or any of the “signs of too much potassium in your body”.



HEART FAILURE AND MEDICATIONS

Angiotensin II Receptor Blockers (ARB)

- Candesartan (Atacand)
- Eprosartan (Teveten)
- Irbesartan (Avapro)
- Losartan (Cozaar)
- Olmesartan (Benicar)
- Telmisartan (Micardis)
- Valsartan (Diovan)

DESCRIPTION:

Angiotensin II receptor blockers inhibit the binding of Angiotensin II to the Angiotensin II receptors found in many tissues. This action stops the blood vessels from constricting and helps prevent your body from retaining sodium (salt) and water. This allows the blood to flow more smoothly and decreases the work of the heart. These medications are used to treat heart failure and high blood pressure. They are usually used when an ACE inhibitor can not be used due to allergy or side effects.

PROPER USE:

- Take as directed. Do not double doses or adjust the dosing on your own.
- Continue to take this medication even if you feel well.
- Do not take within two hours of antacids.

PRECAUTIONS:

- Let your physician know if you have diabetes or any kidney problems.
- Fainting may occur with vigorous exercise, especially in warm weather.
- Check with your physician about using alcohol.
- Do not use these medications if you are pregnant.
- These medications may cause an increase in potassium in your body. Signs of too much potassium in your body include irregular heartbeat, nervousness, tiredness, shortness of breath and tingling in the hands, feet or lips.

HEART FAILURE AND MEDICATIONS

Angiotensin II Receptor Blockers (ARB) (continued)

DIETARY INSTRUCTIONS:

- Check with your physician before using a salt substitute. These often contain potassium.
- Follow your physician's instructions regarding the amount of salt in your diet.

SIDE EFFECTS:

- Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, muscle aches, dizziness, congestion, cough, trouble sleeping, sore throat.
- **Contact your physician immediately** if you experience fainting, fever, chills, rash, swelling of the face, lips, tongue or hands, difficulty breathing or swallowing or any of the “signs of too much potassium in your body”.



HEART FAILURE AND MEDICATIONS

Beta Blocking Agents (Including Carvedilol)

- Acebutolol (Sectral)
- Atenolol (Tenormin)
- Betaxolol (Kerlone)
- Bisoprolol (Zebeta)
- Carteolol (Cartrol)
- Carvedilol (Coreg)
- Labetalol (Normodyne, Trandate)
- Metoprolol (Lopressor, Toprol XL)
- Nadolol (Corgard)
- Penbutolol (Levadol)
- Pindolol (Visken)
- Propranolol (Inderal)
- Sotalol (Betapace)
- Timolol (Blocadren)

DESCRIPTION:

These medications block adrenaline and adrenaline-like chemicals in your body causing the heart muscle to relax and the heart rate to slow. This reduces the workload of the heart. Beta blockers are used to treat high blood pressure, heart failure, chest pain, irregular heartbeats, migraine headaches, tremors and reduce the risk of repeated heart attacks. **Carvedilol (Coreg) and Metoprolol (Lopressor, Toprol XL) are the only beta blockers approved for the treatment of heart failure.**

PROPER USE:

- Some people feel worse when they start taking a beta blocker. Continue to take the medication as directed. It may take weeks before you feel the benefits.
- Continue to take your beta blocker even if you feel well. Do not stop taking a beta-blocker without talking to your physician.
- Ask your physician about skipping or delaying a dose if your pulse is slow.
- Do not break, crush or chew the long acting products.
- Carvedilol should be taken with food, two hours before an ACE Inhibitor.

PRECAUTIONS:

- Make sure your physician knows if you have asthma or any other breathing problems, diabetes, thyroid, kidney or liver disease.
- Beta blockers may affect blood sugar levels in diabetic patients. They also mask the signs of hypoglycemia (low blood sugar). Watch your diet and check your blood sugars as directed.

HEART FAILURE AND MEDICATIONS

Beta Blocking Agents Including Carvedilol (continued)

- Beta blockers can cause a decrease in blood circulation to the extremities. You may be more sensitive to the cold. Dress warmly.
- Beta blockers may decrease tear production. If you wear contact lenses, use additional wetting solution.
- Your heart rate will not increase as much when you exercise. This is a normal response to beta blockers. You will still benefit from the exercise.

DIETARY INSTRUCTIONS:

- Follow your physician's instructions regarding diet guidelines.
- Propranolol should be taken with food.
- The other beta blockers listed can be taken with or without food.

SIDE EFFECTS:

- Dizziness, confusion, nausea, constipation, cold hands and feet, drowsiness, bad dreams, difficulty sleeping, depression, rash, changes in taste, slow heart rate, decreased sexual ability, tingling of the fingers, toes and scalp.
- **Contact your physician immediately** if you experience any chest pain, rash, hives, irregular or very slow heart beat, difficulty breathing or swallowing, swelling of the legs or ankles.



Beta Blocking Agent

- Carvedilol (Coreg)

DESCRIPTION:

Carvedilol is a special type of beta blocker that also has blood vessel dilating properties (alpha blockade). Carvedilol blocks adrenaline and adrenaline-like chemicals in your body causing the heart muscle to relax and the heart rate to slow. This combination of beta and alpha blockade helps decrease resistance in the blood vessels, reduces the workload of the heart and can improve cardiac function. Carvedilol is used to treat heart failure and high blood pressure. Carvedilol has been shown to help those with heart failure live longer.

PROPER USE:

- Your physician will start with a low dose and gradually increase your dosage of Carvedilol. Do not adjust the dosing on your own.
- Take with food.
- If you are on an Angiotensin-Converting Enzyme (ACE) Inhibitor, take your Carvedilol two hours before taking the ACE Inhibitor.

PRECAUTIONS:

- Some people feel worse when they start taking Carvedilol. Continue to take it as directed. It may take several weeks before you feel the benefits of Carvedilol. Do not stop taking Carvedilol without checking with your physician.
- Let your physician know if you have asthma, diabetes, kidney failure or liver failure.
- If you have diabetes, monitor your blood sugar levels as directed.
- Carvedilol may decrease tear production. If you wear contact lenses use additional wetting solution.
- Your heart rate may not increase as much as before when you exercise. This is a normal response to beta blockers. You will still benefit from exercise.

SIDE EFFECTS:

- Tiredness, dizziness, diarrhea, abnormal vision, leg swelling, slow heart rate, sweating, hyperglycemia (high blood sugars).
- **Contact your physician immediately** if you experience any chest pain, irregular heartbeats, rash, hives, fainting, difficulty breathing or swallowing.

HEART FAILURE AND MEDICATIONS

Diuretics “Water Pills”

Thiazide and Related Diuretics

- Bendroflumethiazide (Naturetin)
- Benzthiazide (Exna)
- Chlorothiazide (Diuril)
- Chlorthalidone (Hygroton)
- Hydrochlorothiazide (Esidrix, HydroDIURIL)
- Hydroflumethiazide (Saluron)
- Indapamide (Lozol)
- Quinethazone (Hydromox)
- Trichlormethiazide (Naqua, Diurese)
- Methyclothiazide (Aquatensin, Enduron)
- Metolazone (Diulo, Zaroxolyn)
- Polythiazide (Renese)

Loop Diuretics

- Bumetanide (Bumex)
- Ethacrynic Acid (Edecrin)
- Furosemide (Lasix)
- Torsemide (Demadex)

Potassium Sparing Diuretics

- Amiloride (Midamor)
- Eplerenone (Inspra)
- Spironolactone (Aldactone)
- Triamterene (Dyrenium)

Combination Products

- Amiloride & hydrochlorothiazide
- Spironolactone & hydrochlorothiazide (Aldactazide)
- Triamterene & hydrochlorothiazide (Dyazide, Maxzide)

DESCRIPTION:

Diuretics help the kidneys remove unneeded water and salt from the body. Diuretics make you urinate more. Diuretics are used to treat fluid retention, high blood pressure and heart failure.

PROPER USE:

- Take as directed. Do not double the dose or adjust the dosing on your own.
- Once a day dose should be taken in the morning after breakfast. If taking more often than once a day, the last dose of the day should be taken no later than 4 to 6 hours before bedtime unless otherwise directed by your physician.

PRECAUTIONS:

- Loop and Thiazide diuretics cause a loss of potassium from your body.
- Diuretics may occasionally cause a loss of sodium.

HEART FAILURE AND MEDICATIONS

Diuretics “Water Pills” (continued)

PRECAUTIONS:

- Extra potassium intake is not needed with Potassium Sparing Diuretics.
- Your skin may be more sensitive to sunlight. Use sunscreen and wear protective clothing.
- Loop and Thiazide diuretics may cause an increase in blood sugars in diabetics. Check your blood sugars as directed.

DIETARY INSTRUCTIONS:

- Take with food or milk if these medications upset your stomach.
- Follow your physician’s directions regarding diet and exercise.
- Check with your physician before using a salt substitute. These often contain potassium.

SIDE EFFECTS:

- Nausea, vomiting, headache, dizziness, itching, constipation, diarrhea, decreased sexual ability (spironolactone), breast tenderness or increase in male breast size (spironolactone), hair loss, thirst.
- **Contact your physician immediately** if you experience any ringing in the ears, rash, fever, chills, rapid or excessive weight loss, difficulty breathing or swallowing, unusual bleeding or bruising or any of the following signs of change in potassium and sodium in your body.
- Signs that your body may have lost too much potassium include thirst, irregular heartbeat, muscle cramps, nausea, vomiting, mood changes, tiredness.
- Signs that your body may have lost too much sodium include confusion, decreased mental activity, muscle cramps, tiredness.
- Signs of too much potassium in your body include irregular heartbeat, nervousness, shortness of breath, tiredness, tingling in the hands, feet or lips.



HEART FAILURE AND MEDICATIONS

Potassium Sparing Diuretics / Aldosterone Receptor Antagonist

- Eplerenone (Inspra)
- Spironolactone (Aldactone)

DESCRIPTION:

These potassium sparing diuretics (water pill) are also aldosterone (corticosteroid hormone) receptor blockers. The diuretic action helps the kidneys remove excess water and salt from the body. Blocking aldosterone prevents reactions in the body that can contribute to heart failure such as constriction of the blood vessels and sodium and water retention. Eplerenone and Spironolactone are used to treat heart failure, high blood pressure and fluid retention.

PROPER USE:

- It may take 2 months or longer to see the beneficial effects of therapy. Once a day dose should be taken in the morning after breakfast. If taking more than once a day, the last dose should be taken no later than 6 PM unless otherwise directed by your physician.

PRECAUTIONS:

- Tell your physician and pharmacist if you are allergic to “Sulfa” drugs or any other medications.
- Spironolactone may cause an increase of potassium in your body. Signs of too much potassium in your body include irregular heartbeat, nervousness, shortness of breath, tiredness and tingling in the hands, feet or lips.
- Spironolactone may cause dizziness. Stand up slowly from a sitting or lying position.
- Check with your physician about drinking alcohol while on this medication.

DIETARY INSTRUCTIONS:

- Take with food.
- Limit your intake of potassium rich foods like bananas, prunes, raisins and orange juice.
- Check with your physician before using a salt substitute. These often contain potassium.

SIDE EFFECTS:

- Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal cramping, headache, confusion, dizziness, enlarged or painful breasts, impotence, menstrual irregularities.
- **Contact your physician immediately** if you experience any muscle weakness, rapid or excessive weight loss, fatigue, slow or irregular heartbeat, rash.

HEART FAILURE AND MEDICATIONS

Digoxin

- Lanoxin
- Lanoxicaps

DESCRIPTION:

Digoxin is used to treat heart failure and abnormal heart rhythms. It helps the heart work more efficiently and helps control heart rate. This leads to better blood circulation and reduced swelling of the hands and ankles.

PROPER USE:

- Take as directed at approximately the same time each day.
- Do not double the dose or adjust the dosing on your own.
- Continue to take your Digoxin even if you feel well.
- Ask your physician if you should check your pulse rate before taking each dose.

PRECAUTIONS:

- Do not stop taking Digoxin without checking with your physician.
- Do not switch brands of Digoxin without checking with your physician.
- Let your physician know if you have any kidney disease.
- **Watch for signs of too much Digoxin in your body.** These include loss of appetite, nausea, slow or irregular heartbeat, blurred or yellow-green vision, confusion, fainting.

DIETARY INSTRUCTIONS:

- Digoxin can be taken with food or on an empty stomach. Avoid taking Digoxin at the same time as a high fiber meal.
- Follow any special diet instructions your physician gives you.

IF YOU MISS A DOSE:

- Take a missed dose as soon as you remember. If it is more than 12 hours since you missed the dose (or more than 6 hours if you are taking Digoxin twice a day), skip the missed dose and continue your regular dosing schedule (unless your physician gives you other instructions).
- Do not take two doses to make up for a missed dose.
- If you miss two doses in a row contact your doctor.

HEART FAILURE AND MEDICATIONS

Digoxin (continued)

SIDE EFFECTS:

- Dizziness, drowsiness, rash, slow or irregular heartbeat, nausea.
- **Contact your physician immediately** if you experience any of the signs of “too much Digoxin in your body”, any swelling of the feet or hands, unusual weight gain, difficulty breathing or severe diarrhea.



To support your treatment it is recommended that you receive an annual flu shot (influenza vaccine) to help you avoid this year's worst flu.

The pneumococcal vaccine (pneumovax) can help protect you from pneumonia, meningitis and other serious infections. Ask your doctor if you have had this vaccine or if you should receive it.

Both vaccines have been shown to be very safe and effective.

HEART FAILURE AND MEDICATIONS

Platelet Inhibitors

- Aspirin (ASA)
- Ascriptin
- Bayer
- Bufferin
- Ecotrin
- Alka-Seltzer

DESCRIPTION:

Aspirin is used to relieve pain, fever, headaches, inflammation and stiffness. It is also used to decrease blood clotting and reduce the risk of a heart attack or stroke.

PROPER USE:

- If taking daily, take as directed by your physician.
- Check with your physician before using for pain, fever or inflammation.
- Take with a full glass of water. Do not lie down for 15 to 30 minutes after taking aspirin.
- Take with food to decrease stomach upset.
- Do not break, crush or chew the long-acting aspirin products.
- Chewable aspirin should be chewed or crushed thoroughly and followed by a full glass of water.
- Children should **not** take aspirin for a fever, chickenpox or symptoms of the flu. Aspirin may cause a serious illness known as Reye's syndrome in young children.
- Do not take aspirin that has a strong vinegar-like odor. This means the aspirin is breaking down.
- If your physician wants you to take an aspirin at the first sign of a heart attack, use the regular or chewable aspirin. Do not use enteric-coated or long acting aspirin for this purpose.

PRECAUTIONS:

- Tell your physician and pharmacist if you are allergic to aspirin, any arthritis medications (like Ibuprofen or Advil), dyes or any other medications.
- Tell your doctor and pharmacist what prescription and non-prescription medications you are taking, especially any blood thinners, steroids or medications for diabetes, gout, arthritis or high blood pressure.

HEART FAILURE AND MEDICATIONS

Platelet Inhibitor: Aspirin (continued)

- Do not take Excedrin or other products that contain caffeine. Caffeine can cause rapid or irregular heart beats, high blood pressure and angina.
- Check with your doctor before taking aspirin if you are pregnant.
- Tell your doctor if you have asthma, gout, stomach ulcers, kidney problems, diabetes, bleeding problems or any other health conditions.
- Check with your doctor before drinking alcohol if you are taking aspirin.
- Before any surgery tell your doctor or dentist that you are taking aspirin.
- Aspirin may cause incorrect results with some urine sugar tests.

DIETARY INSTRUCTIONS:

- Take with food to decrease stomach upset.
- Take with a full glass (6-8 ounces) of water.

SIDE EFFECTS:

- Upset stomach, heartburn, increased risk of bleeding or bruising.
- **Contact your physician immediately** if you have any ringing in the ears, loss of hearing, severe stomach pain, bloody or black stools, bloody vomit or vomit that looks like coffee grounds, rash, mental confusion, difficulty breathing, severe dizziness or swelling of the face or eyelids.

STORAGE:

- Discard aspirin if it has a strong vinegar smell.

Other Platelet Inhibitors:

- Cilostazol (Pletal)
- Clopidogrel bisulfate (Plavix)
- Dipyridamole (Persantine)
- Ticlopidine (Ticlid)

HEART FAILURE AND MEDICATIONS

Isosorbide

- Dilatrate
- Isordil
- Imdur
- ISMO
- Monoket
- Sorbitrate

DESCRIPTION:

Isosorbide relaxes the blood vessels going to the heart resulting in an increase in the blood and oxygen supplied to the heart. Isosorbide is used to treat heart failure and chest pain.

PROPER USE:

- Take as directed. Do not double the dose or adjust the dosing on your own.
- Do not stop taking Isosorbide without talking to your physician, even if it is causing headaches. Let your doctor know about the headaches.
- There should be a 10 to 12 hour interval between the last Isosorbide dose of the day and the first dose of the next day.
- If using ISMO, Monoket or Imdur twice a day, the doses should be 7 hours apart. First dose upon awakening, second dose 7 hours later.

PRECAUTIONS:

- Let your physician know if you have a low red blood cell count (anemia).
- Isosorbide may cause dizziness or drowsiness. Make sure you know how you react to it before you drive or do other activities that require you to be alert.
- Check with your physician about the use of alcohol.
- Get up slowly from a sitting or lying position. Isosorbide can cause fainting if you get up quickly.
- Fainting may occur during vigorous exercise, especially in warm weather.

DIETARY INSTRUCTIONS:

- Take on an empty stomach with a full glass of water.

HEART FAILURE AND MEDICATIONS


Isosorbide (continued)

SIDE EFFECTS:

- Headache, rash, dizziness, upset stomach, nausea, flushing, fast heartbeat.
- **Contact your physician immediately** if you experience blurred vision, dry mouth, chest pain, severe or prolonged headaches.

OTHER INSTRUCTIONS:

If Isosorbide causes a headache ask your doctor about using acetaminophen (Tylenol). Do not use aspirin or any other headache or pain medication without checking with your physician.



Remember to weigh yourself every day.

- Call your doctor if your weight goes up more than 3 pounds in one day

Or

- Call your doctor if your weight goes up more than 5 pounds in one week

Hydralazine (Apresoline)

DESCRIPTION:

Hydralazine works by relaxing the blood vessels so that the blood can flow more easily through the body. It is used to treat heart failure and high blood pressure.

PROPER USE:

- Take as directed. Do not double the dose or adjust the dosing on your own.
- Do not stop taking Hydralazine without talking to your physician.

PRECAUTIONS:

- Tell you physician and pharmacist if you are allergic to any medications or tartrazine dye (yellow dye).
- May cause headaches or make you feel dizzy. Make sure you know how you react to Hydralazine before you drive or do other activities that require you to be alert.
- Get up slowly from a sitting or lying position. Hydralazine can cause fainting if you get up quickly.
- Let your physician know if you have Lupus.
- Report any flu-like symptoms to your physician.
- Check with your physician about drinking alcohol while on Hydralazine.

DIETARY INSTRUCTIONS:

- Take with meals or a snack.
- Follow your physician's instructions regarding salt in your diet.

SIDE EFFECTS:

- Flushing, headache, upset stomach, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, stuffy nose, watery eyes, fast heartbeat, numbness or tingling of the hands and feet.
- **Contact your physician immediately** if you have unexplained fever, joint or muscle pain, chest pain, swelling of the feet or legs.

HEART FAILURE AND MEDICATIONS

Never take any over-the-counter medications (OTC) or supplements without first consulting with your doctor and pharmacist. This includes dietary supplements like herbs and vitamins, pain and cold medications and other non-prescription medication. These seemingly harmless preparations can interfere with your prescription medications. Be sure to list all over-the-counter medications on your drug list.



Cholesterol Lowering Agents / Antihyperlipidemics / HMG-CoA Reductase Inhibitors “Statins”

- Atorvastatin (Lipitor)
- Fluvastatin (Lescol)
- Lovastatin (Mevacor)
- Pravastatin (Pravachol)
- Rosuvastatin (Crestor)
- Simvastatin (Zocor)

DESCRIPTION:

“Statins” work by blocking a chemical that the body uses to make cholesterol. With diet changes, “statins” are used to reduce the amount of cholesterol and certain fatty substances in your blood. Lowering your blood level of cholesterol and fats helps to prevent heart disease, chest pain, strokes and heart attacks.

PROPER USE:

- Take as directed. Do not double the dose or adjust the dosing on your own.
- Continue to take your “statin” even if you feel well.
- Atorvastatin can be taken at any time of the day. Take it at the same time each day.
- Take Lovastatin with food, with the evening meal if taking once a day.
- The other “statins” should be taken at **bedtime**.

PRECAUTIONS:

- Make sure your physician and pharmacist are aware of all prescription and non-prescription medications you are taking (especially Erythromycin, Niacin, Gemfibrozil and Cyclosporine). This will help avoid any possible drug interactions.
- “Statins” should not be taken during pregnancy or while breast-feeding.
- Let your physician know if you have a history of liver disease or alcohol abuse.
- Check with your physician before drinking alcohol while you are taking these medications.

DIETARY INSTRUCTIONS:

- Take Lovastatin with food.
- The other “statins” may be taken with food to decrease stomach upset.

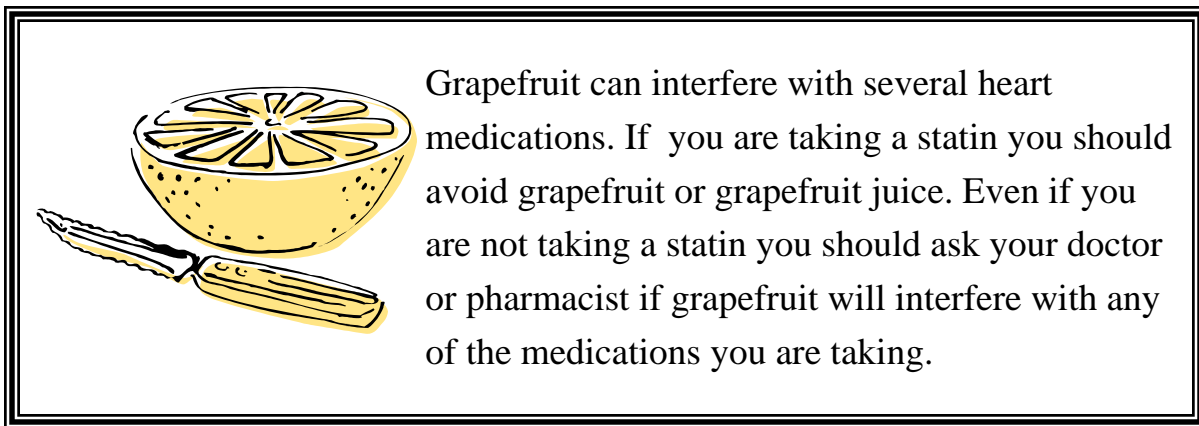
HEART FAILURE AND MEDICATIONS

Cholesterol Lowering Agents / Antihyperlipidemics / HMG-CoA Reductase Inhibitors “Statins” (continued)

- Follow your physician’s directions regarding a low-cholesterol, low-fat diet.
- Avoid grapefruit and grapefruit juice.

SIDE EFFECTS:

- Unexplained muscle pain, weakness or cramps.
- Constipation, diarrhea, heartburn, gas, stomach pain, dizziness, headache, decreased sexual ability (Lovastatin), trouble sleeping (Lovastatin).
- **Contact your physician immediately** if you have any muscle pain, blurred vision, unusual tiredness or weakness.



Other Lipid Medications

for lowering blood cholesterol, lowering triglycerides or raising HDL “good cholesterol”

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| • Colesevelam HCL (Welchol) | • Ezetimibe and Simvastatin (Vytorin) |
| • Cholestyramine (Questran) | • Fenofibrate (Tricor) |
| • Colestipol HCL (Colestid) | • Gemfibrozil (Lopid) |
| • Ezetimibe (Zetia) | • Niacin (Niaspan, Nicolar) |

HEART FAILURE AND MEDICATIONS

Antiarrhythmics (heart rhythm medications)

- Amiodarone (Cordarone, Pacerone)

DESCRIPTION:

Amiodarone is used to treat or prevent irregular heart beats called arrhythmias. It helps to maintain a normal heart rate and rhythm. Amiodarone is used to treat or prevent atrial fibrillation, atrial flutter, ventricular tachycardia or other irregular or rapid heart rates.

PROPER USE:

- It may take weeks or months to feel the benefits of Amiodarone.
- Continue to take as directed. Do not adjust the dosing on your own.

PRECAUTIONS:

- Amiodarone can interact with many medications. Be sure your physician and pharmacist are aware of all prescription and non-prescription medications you take.
- Tell your physician if you have thyroid, liver or lung disease.
- Your skin will be more sensitive to sunlight. Avoid prolonged exposure to sunlight. Wear protective clothing and use sunscreen.
- Check with your physician before drinking alcohol.
- Keep all your medical appointments (blood tests, EKGs, chest X-rays, etc.). You will need ongoing monitoring by your health care provider while you are on Amiodarone.

DIETARY INSTRUCTIONS:

- Take with food to decrease stomach upset.

SIDE EFFECTS:

- Nausea, vomiting, constipation, metallic or salty taste, loss of appetite, vision changes (halos or light sensitivity), dizziness, blue-gray skin discoloration.
- **Contact your physician immediately** if you have any chest pain, rapid or irregular heartbeat, shortness of breath, rash, muscle weakness or persistent cough.

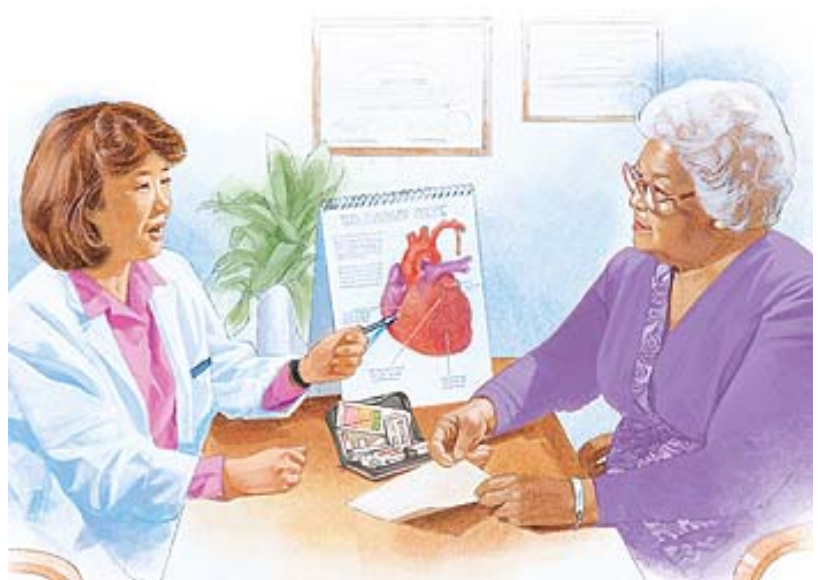
HEART FAILURE AND MEDICATIONS

Additional Antiarrhythmics (heart rhythm medications)

Antiarrhythmics are used to treat or prevent irregular heart beats called arrhythmias. They help to maintain a normal heart rate and rhythm.

- Amiodarone (Cordarone, Pacerone)
- Disopyramide phosphate (Norpace)
- Dofetilide (Tikosyn)
- Flecainide (Tambocor)
- Mexiletine HCL (Mexitil)
- Procainamide (Procan, Pronestyl)
- Propafenone HCL (Rythmol, Rythmol SR)
- Quinidine gluconate (Quinaglute)
- Sotalol (Betapace) see beta blocker section
- Tocainide HCL (Tonocard)

Communication is key. Talk to your doctor, pharmacist and other healthcare providers about your medications. They need your feedback to understand how you are responding to treatment and to make adjustments if needed.



HEART FAILURE AND MEDICATIONS

Anticoagulants “Blood Thinners”

- Warfarin (Coumadin)

DESCRIPTION:

Warfarin works by stopping the formation of substances that cause clots. Warfarin is used to prevent clots from forming or growing larger. It does not dissolve clots that already have formed.

PROPER USE:

- Take exactly as directed. Do not double the dose or adjust the dosing on your own.
- Keep all your appointments with the laboratory to have your bleeding time measured (INR).
- Continue to take Warfarin even if you feel well.

PRECAUTIONS:

- Make sure your physician and pharmacist are aware of all prescription and non-prescription medications you are taking, especially antibiotics, pain medications (aspirin, Aleve, Nuprin, etc.), Cimetidine (Tagamet) or herbal medications (Ginko).
- Let your physician know if you have stomach ulcers, kidney or liver disease.
- Alert all your doctors and dentist to the fact that you are taking Warfarin.
- Carry identification stating that you are taking Warfarin.
- Check with your physician about drinking alcohol.
- Do not switch brands of Warfarin without talking to your physician.

DIETARY INSTRUCTIONS:

- Do not make any major changes in your diet especially with regards to leafy green vegetables. Try to eat a consistent amount of foods that contain vitamin K (leafy greens, dark green vegetables and green tea). Vitamin K counteracts the Warfarin.
- Follow any special diet instructions your physician gives you.

IF YOU MISS A DOSE:

- Take a missed dose as soon as you remember. If it is almost time for your next dose, skip the missed dose and continue your regular dosing schedule (unless your physician gives you other instructions).

HEART FAILURE AND MEDICATIONS

Warfarin (continued)

- Do not take two doses to make up for a missed dose.
- If you miss two doses in a row contact your doctor.

SIDE EFFECTS:

- Upset stomach, diarrhea, bruising, hair loss.
- **Contact your physician immediately** if you experience any unusual bleeding or bruising, black or bloody stools, blood in the urine, bleeding from the gums, heavy or unexpected menstrual bleeding, fever, chills, severe abdominal pain or swelling or any discoloration of the toes or feet.

Other Anticoagulants (Blood Thinners)

- Daltepararin sodium (Fragmin)
- Enoxaparin (Lovenox)
- Fondaparinux (Arixtra)
- Heparin



Nitroglycerin Sublingual Tablets and Spray

- Nitrostat tablets
- Nitrolingual spray

DESCRIPTION:

Nitroglycerin is used to treat chest, arm, jaw or other heart related pain known as angina. It works by relaxing the blood vessels in the heart so that more oxygen-carrying blood can reach the heart muscle.

PROPER USE:

- Carry your sublingual tablets or nitroglycerin spray with you at all times. Use at the first sign of chest pain or 5 to 10 minutes prior to engaging in activities (exercise, sexual activity, climbing stairs, etc.) that might cause chest pain.
- The drug starts to work within 2 minutes and continues to work for about 30 minutes.

Sublingual Tablets (under the tongue)

- Sit down and place a tablet under your tongue. Let the tablet dissolve under your tongue. Do not chew or swallow the tablet. If your chest pain is not relieved within 5 minutes take another tablet.
- Do not take more than 3 tablets in 15 minutes. If your chest pain does not go away after taking 3 tablets in 15 minutes, call your doctor or seek medical attention immediately.



HEART FAILURE AND MEDICATIONS

Nitroglycerin Aerosol Spray

- Sit down to use. Remove the plastic cover. Do not shake the canister. Hold the canister upright with the opening of the spray mechanism as close as possible to your open mouth. Spray the drug onto or under your tongue and close your mouth. Do not inhale or swallow the spray (wait about 10 seconds before swallowing after each use). You may repeat a spray every 3 to 5 minutes, up to 3 sprays in 15 minutes, if the chest pain does not go away.
- If your chest pain continues after 15 minutes, call your doctor or seek medical attention immediately.



The spray canister contains 200 doses. To help keep track of how many doses are left in your canister, use one of these three methods:

1. Count and record each dose as you use it.
2. Place an “X” in a grid of 200 boxes after each use.
3. Estimate the number of doses by floating the canister in a bowl of water. Remove the plastic cover from the spray nozzle before floating. Full canister (200 doses): floats totally submerged in the water. $\frac{3}{4}$ canister (about 150 doses): will float upright or upside down with $\frac{3}{4}$ of the canister underwater and $\frac{1}{4}$ of the canister above water. $\frac{1}{2}$ canister (about 100 doses): will float upright or upside down with $\frac{1}{2}$ the canister underwater and $\frac{1}{2}$ of the canister above water. $\frac{1}{4}$ canister or empty (50 doses or less): will float on its side with the majority of the canister above the water.

HEART FAILURE AND MEDICATIONS

Nitroglycerin Sublingual Tablets and Spray (continued)

PRECAUTIONS:

- Nitroglycerin will lower your blood pressure and may make you dizzy or lightheaded. Get up slowly from a sitting or lying position. If you are feeling lightheaded or dizzy after the first dose of nitroglycerin do not repeat the dose. Call your doctor or 911 if your angina does not go away.
- Tell your physician and pharmacist if you are allergic to Nitroglycerin, Isosorbide or any other medications.
- You should not take Viagra if you are using Nitroglycerin.
- Notify your doctor if you are pregnant or breast-feeding.
- Check with your physician about using alcohol.

DIETARY INSTRUCTIONS:

- Do not eat, drink, smoke or use chewing tobacco while a tablet is dissolving under your tongue or at the same time as using the Nitroglycerin spray.

SIDE EFFECTS:

- Flushing, lightheadedness, headache, rash, upset stomach. Occasionally some patients may feel a slight stinging sensation while the tablet is dissolving under their tongue.
- **Contact your physician immediately** if you have any blurred vision, fainting, worsening of chest pain or trouble breathing.

STORAGE:

- Keep the nitroglycerin tablets tightly closed in the bottle they came in.
- Store the tablets and spray at room temperature away from excessive heat and moisture.
- Do not store in the bathroom or refrigerator.

OTHER INSTRUCTIONS:

- Keep three sublingual tablets or the spray with you at all times. If the tablets are carried in pant or shirt pockets your body heat can destroy the drug and make it less effective. Replace the three tablets every month. Throw away the tablets that you are replacing. The spray is more stable and is good until the expiration date.
- Replace your supply of tablets if they have expired, been exposed to high temperature or start to powder. It's a good idea to replace opened bottles of Nitroglycerin tablets every 3 months or sooner.

HEART FAILURE AND MEDICATIONS

REMEMBER:

- Keep a current list of your medications with you at all times and take it to all your doctor appointments. Use the medication list provided in this binder as well as a wallet card.
- Refill your prescriptions before you run out.
- There may not be refills on the medications that were started in the hospital. That does not mean you should stop taking these medicines. You need to follow up with your doctor before you run out of medication.
- Keep your medicine organized and do not keep medications that you no longer take.
- Don't skip doses or stop taking your medication.
- Let your doctor know if you are unable to afford the medicine that has been prescribed for you. There may be less expensive alternatives or drug company assistance.
- *Medication errors or stopping medications without instructions from your doctor is the number one reason heart patients require hospitalization.*



A

long with a healthy, low salt diet and exercise, medications can help you live longer and better.

HEART FAILURE AND MEDICATIONS**MEDICATION RECORD**

Name: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Pharmacy: _____ Phone: _____

Cardiologist: _____ Phone: _____

Primary Physician: _____ Phone: _____

Medication	Dose	Interval	Reason
Brand:			
Generic:			
Brand:			
Generic:			
Brand:			
Generic:			
Brand:			
Generic:			
Brand:			
Generic:			
Brand:			
Generic:			

Allergies or other problems with medications:

HEART FAILURE AND MEDICATIONS

MEDICATION RECORD

Name: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Pharmacy: _____ Phone: _____

Cardiologist: _____ Phone: _____

Primary Physician: _____ Phone: _____

Medication	Dose	Interval	Reason
Brand: Generic:			
Brand: Generic:			
Brand: Generic:			
Brand: Generic:			
Brand: Generic:			
Brand: Generic:			
Brand: Generic:			

Allergies or other problems with medications:
