

## Medications for Heart Disease

There are many medicines that may be used to treat heart disease. Ask your doctor or pharmacist if you have questions about your medicines.

### Angiotensin 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 to 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 and heart failure. They may also be used after a heart attack.

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

#### Medication names:

Benazapril (Lotensin)  
Captopril (Capoten)  
Enalapril (Vasotec)  
Fosinopril (Monopril)  
Lisinopril (Prinivil, Zestril)

Moexipril (Univasc)  
Quinapril (Accupril)  
Ramipril (Altace)  
Trandolopril (Mavik)

### Angiotensin II receptor blocker (ARB)

ARB's 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 that can worsen heart failure.

These medicines are used to treat high blood pressure and heart failure. They may be used after a heart attack.

**Side effects may include:** dizziness, weakness, diarrhea

#### Medication names:

Candesartan (Atacand)  
Irbesartan (Avapro)  
Losartan (Cozaar)  
Telmisartan (Micardis)

Olmesartan (Benicar)  
Valsartan (Diovan)  
Eprosartan (Tevetan)

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### 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, fast heart rate and angina (chest pain) and may be used after heart attack or heart surgery.

**Side effects may include:** dizziness, slow heart rate, fatigue, shortness of breath, impotence and fluid build-up (when first starting the medicine).

### Medication names:

Carvedilol (Coreg) – Used primarily for congestive heart failure

Metoprolol tartrate (Lopressor)

Metoprolol succinate (Torpol XL)

Atenolol (Tenormin)

Propranolol (Inderal)

Sotalol (Betapace) – Used primarily for Atrial Fibrillation

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## Calcium channel blockers

This type of medicine lowers blood pressure, slows the heart rate and decreases the force the heart pumps against.

These medicines are used to treat high blood pressure, fast heart rate and angina (chest pain).

**Side effects may include:** dizziness, lightheadedness, shortness of breath, constipation and swelling in the ankles.

### Medication names:

Amlodipine (Norvasc)

Diltiazem (Cardizem, Dilacor, Tiazac, Taztia, Tiazac)

Verapamil (Calan, Isoptin, Covera, Verelen)

Felodipine (Plendil)

Nisoldipine (Sular)

Isradipine (DynaCirc)

Nifedipine (Procardia, Adalat)

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### Nitrates

These medicines help relax the blood vessels so blood flows more easily through the body. They open 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, lightheadedness, flushing of face or neck, skin rash.

Medication names:

Isosorbide dinitrate (Iso-bid, Isordil) – short acting

Isosorbide mononitrate (Imdur, Ismo, Monoket)

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.

Nitroglycerin patch (Nitro-dur, Minitran, Transderm nitro) – placed on non-hairy skin and sites must be rotated.

Spray or Sublingual nitro – most often in 0.4mg tablets or spray. When having chest pain, take one tablet under the tongue or one spray. You may feel tingling or a headache when you take nitro. If pain does not ease after 5 minutes, repeat dose. You can take up to 3 doses total. If pain is not eased, call 911.

Keep nitro bottle out of moist area, such as the bathroom.

Keep nitro spray or tablets with you at all times.

Once the nitro bottle is open, throw the tablets away after 6 months.

Check the expiration date and be sure to throw the medicine away after that date.

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### 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 when the extra fluid is removed from your body.

These medicines are used to treat high blood pressure, heart failure and fluid buildup in lungs and feet or hands.

**Side effects may include:** dizziness, weakness, muscle cramps, dry mouth and increased thirst.

#### Medication names:

Bumetanide (Bumex)  
Furosemide (Lasix)  
Torsemide (Demadex)

Hydrochlorothiazide (HCTZ)  
Metolazone (Zaroxolyn)  
Spironolactone (Aldactone)

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### **Digoxin**

Digitalis (Digoxin, Lanoxin, Digitek) can strengthen the heart muscle so it pumps better. It also helps control the rate and rhythm 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. If this occurs, you may have one or more of these symptoms:

- Loss of appetite
- Nausea and vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Abdominal pain and bloating
- Frequent headaches
- Changes in vision
- Skipped heart beats, pounding heart or rapid heartbeat.

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## Cholesterol lowering agents

High levels of cholesterol in the body increase the risk of heart disease. Your cholesterol levels and your liver functions should be checked with blood tests 1-2 times each year.

### **Statins** (HMG-CoA Reductase Inhibitors)

This group blocks the production of cholesterol in the liver to lower total cholesterol and bad LDL cholesterol but raise good HDL cholesterol levels.

**Side effects may include:** Upset stomach, gas, belching, muscle or joint weakness or pain, elevated liver enzymes.

### **Medication names:**

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

### **Nicotinic Acid**

This is a form of Vitamin B complex. It lowers total cholesterol and bad LDL cholesterol but raises good cholesterol levels.

**Side effects may include:** flushing, stomach discomfort, dry skin, rash, elevated liver enzymes.

### **Medication names:**

Niacin – short acting  
Niaspan – long acting

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## **Fibrates**

This group of medicines lowers triglyceride levels and raises good HDL cholesterol.

**Side effects may include:** stomach upset, nausea, rash, elevated liver enzymes.

### **Medication names:**

Gemfibrozil (Lopid)  
Fenofibrate (Tricor)

## **Bile acid sequestrants**

This group of medicines works in the intestines to slow cholesterol absorption into or out of the blood stream, lowering total cholesterol and bad LDL cholesterol levels.

**Side effects may include:** constipation, upset stomach, gas, diarrhea, back pain.

### **Medication names:**

Cholestyramine (Questran)  
Colestipol (Colestid)  
Colesevelam (WelChol)  
Exetimibe (Zetia)

## **Combination medicines:**

Advicor – statin drug and Niacin  
Caduet – Lipitor and Norvasc  
Vytorin – Zetia and Zocor  
Pravigard – Aspirin and Pravachol

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### **Anti-arrhythmia medications**

**Amiodarone (Cordarone)**

**Flecainide (Tambocor)**

**Propafenone (Rythmol)**

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:** chest pain, slow heart beat, palpitations, fatigue, headache, dizziness, nausea, vomiting, unusual taste in the mouth, stomach pain, constipation or diarrhea, difficulty breathing, rash, vision problems, urinary retention in men, arrhythmias.

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### **Anti-coagulants (blood thinners)**

#### **Aspirin (Bayer, Bufferin, Ecotrin, St. Joseph's other generic brands)**

Prevents blood clot formation that could cause heart attack, mini stroke or stroke. Also used to treat fever, pain and decreases inflammation.

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

#### **Clopidogrel (Plavix)**

Prevents blood platelets from clumping to decrease risk of blood clots.  
Used after stent procedures, for heart disease and to prevent heart attack or stroke.

**Side effects may include:** rash, allergic reaction, black, bloody or tarry stools, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, skin bruising, headache, confusion, bleeding nose, bloody vomit, diarrhea or constipation.

#### **Warfarin (Coumadin, Jantoven)**

Anticoagulant that thins blood to reduce the risk of blood clots forming.  
Used for prevention of heart attack or stroke in atrial fibrillation or after valve replacement surgery.

Side effects may include: bleeding in mouth, bruising of skin, blood in stools, vomit or urine, dizziness or headache.

This medicine requires close checks by your doctor with frequent blood draws to check PT/INR levels. Also need to avoid changes in diet that change Vitamin K levels, such as increasing green leafy vegetables.