

*Patient Education Sheet*

**Medications to Treat Heart Failure**

**Why are prescribed medications important?**

Treatment for congestive heart failure (CHF) focuses on the cause of the failure and the resulting symptoms. Generally, medications are given to make the heart pump blood more effectively.

Medications are most effective when taken as prescribed by your physician. They will decrease your risk of having a relapse or “exacerbation” of heart failure.

It is important to know the names of your medications and how they work. Your physician will decide which medications are best for you. Below are some common classifications of medications that are ordered for CHF.

**ACE Inhibitors** (Angiotensin-Converting Enzyme) and **ARB’s** (Angiotensin Receptor Blockers)

Examples of ACE Inhibitors and their generic names include:

- Lotensin (benazepril)
- Capoten (captopril)
- Vasotec (enalapril)
- Zestril or Prinivil (lisinopril)

These classes of medications make blood vessels open up and therefore cause blood pressure to drop. By reducing blood pressure, there is less strain on the heart and the heart does not have to work as hard.

A common **side effect** for both classes of these medications is dizziness.

A common **side effect** for ACE inhibitors is a cough.

Examples of ARB’s include:

- Diovan (valsartan)
- Atacand (candesartan)

**Diuretics** (water pills)

Examples of diuretics and their generic names include:

- Hydrodiuril or Oretic (hydrochlorothiazide)
- Lozol (indapamide)
- Zaroxolyn (metolazone)
- Lasix, (furosemide)
- Bumex (bumetanide)
- Demadex (torsemide)

This class of medications helps the kidneys get rid of extra water and sodium (salt) in the body. By eliminating excess water and sodium, the heart is able to function more efficiently. A desired effect is increased urination, so it may be helpful to take diuretics in the morning to reduce the number of times needed to get up during the night to urinate.

The **side effects** may also make you feel dizzy, especially when standing or sitting up too quickly



## **Aldosterone Receptor Antagonists**

Examples of this medication and the generic names are:

- Spironolactone (Aldactone)
- Eplerenone (Inspra)

This medication is used to help your heart heal. It is used with other medications to lower blood pressure and remove excess fluid caused by heart failure. Some side effects such as dizziness, diarrhea, vomiting, stomach pain and dry mouth can occur.

## **Cardiac Glycoside**

An example of this medication is:

- Digoxin (Lanoxin)

This medication increases the force of the heart's contractions and can slow down certain types of irregular heart rhythms. It is important to notify your physician if you feel nauseous, confused, or experience visual problems while taking this medication.

## **Beta Blockers**

Examples of beta blockers and their generic names include:

- Toprol XL (metoprolol)
- Zebeta (bisoprolol)
- Coreg (carvedilol)

With heart failure, the heart is being continuously worked and stressed. This class of medications helps to decrease the work of the heart. They also allow the heart to beat in a more productive manner at a decreased rate. Common

**side effects** include feeling tired and lightheaded or dizzy.

## **What other points are important?**

It is important to let all of your health care providers know that you have been diagnosed with heart failure. Keep them informed of the medications you are taking and any changes in your medication prescriptions. Also, it is very important to keep a list of your medications with you in the event of an emergency visit to the hospital.

Be careful of over-the-counter drugs (those that can be bought without a prescription), herbals and supplements. They may cause "drug interactions" with your prescription medications, or side effects that happen when some medications and herbals are taken together. Always check with your doctor before taking a new over-the-counter drug, herbal or supplement.



Remember to take your medications as prescribed. Let your doctor or health care provider know if you are having difficulty getting or taking the medication or if you have side effects. Do not stop taking your medications even though you feel better.

*Source:*

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