

Antiarrhythmics

Common Use: Antiarrhythmics are used to treat heart rhythm disorders or irregular heartbeats.

There are 4 different classes or categories of Antiarrhythmics medications:

- Class I: Sodium-channel blockers, which slow electrical conduction of the heart.
- Class II: Beta-blockers, which work by blocking the impulses that may be causing an irregular heart rate.
- Class III: Antiarrhythmics medications that slow the electrical impulses in the heart by blocking potassium channels in the heart.
- Class IV: Antiarrhythmics medications that block calcium channels in the heart.

Key Tips:

- Take your antiarrhythmic medication as ordered by your doctor. Do not stop taking your medication unless your doctor tells you to do so.
- Some antiarrhythmics may make your skin burn more easily – if you are going to be out in the sunlight, wear sunscreen.
- Some antiarrhythmics may make you feel dizzy or lightheaded. It is important to move slowly from a sitting to standing position to reduce the feeling of lightheadedness.
- People who have kidney or liver problems, asthma, diabetes, or overactive thyroid should notify their doctor of the presence of these conditions when starting Beta Blockers.
- For women of child-bearing years, speak with your doctor about taking Antiarrhythmics if you are or plan on becoming pregnant.

Common Side Effects with Antiarrhythmics:

- Dizziness or lightheadedness
- Headache
- Tiredness/drowsiness
- Feeling flushed (warm)
- Stomach upset

Warning Signs

Call your doctor if you have any of these signs:

- Chest pain
- Problems breathing
- Fainting
- Slow heartbeat (less than 60 beats per minute)
- Swelling in the hands, feet, ankles or legs
- Irregular heartbeat

If you notice other side effects that you think are caused by this medicine, tell your doctor. Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects.

Reference: National Library of Medicine/MedlinePlus @ www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus ; Texas Heart Institute @ www.texasheartinstitute.org