

Heart Failure Medications

Type of Medicine	What They Do	Possible Side Effects	Notes
Angiotensin- Converting Enzyme (ACE) inhibitor	Stops the body from making angiotensin so the blood vessels can relax – this lowers your blood pressure and decreases the work on the heart. The heart pumps better and blood flow is improved.	Dizziness, dry cough, change in kidney function, too much potassium in the body, swelling of the mouth, lips, or tongue	Check and write down your blood pressure daily as part of your heart failure plan. Will start with a low dose and increase slowly over time. You will have lab tests to monitor your potassium and kidney function. Get medical help if your mouth, lips or tongue swell.
Angiotensin Receptor Blocker (ARB)	Blocks the effects of angiotensin so the blood vessels can relax- this lowers your blood pressure and decreases the work on the heart. The heart pumps better and blood flow is improved. May be used instead of an ACE.	Dizziness, dry cough, change in kidney function, too much potassium in the body, swelling of the mouth, lips, or tongue	Check and write down your blood pressure daily as part of your heart failure plan. Will start with a low dose and increase slowly over time. You will have lab tests to monitor your potassium and kidney function. Get medical help if your mouth, lips or tongue swell.
Beta-blocker	Alters hormones that make the heart pump too fast with too much force. This lowers blood pressure and slows the heart rate. May strengthen the heart's pumping action over time.	Dizziness, low heart rate, depression, tiredness, sexual dysfunction, heart failure symptoms may be worse at first, but will improve over time	Will start with a low dose and increase slowly over time. Do not stop without calling your doctor, check heart rate and write down regularly. Call your doctor if you have side effects.
Diuretic	Helps the body get rid of extra fluid which will decrease swelling and may improve breathing. Less fluid to	Frequent urination, loss of potassium, magnesium, or sodium from the body, kidney problems, low blood	The dose will vary according to how much fluid your body is holding. You may need to take a



Diuretic (cont.)	pump is less work on the heart. May also be called a water pill.	pressure, high blood sugar, gout, impotence, dehydration	potassium supplement by your doctor. Take early in the day Frequent urination and thirst are common Call the doctor for: sudden weight changes, swelling in feet, hands, belly, dizziness, muscle cramps.
Aldosterone Antagonist	Blocks the effect of aldosterone, a hormone that can make heart failure worse.	Changes in kidney function, low blood pressure, breast swelling, tenderness or enlargement (in men and women), too much potassium in the body	Potassium levels need to be monitored while on this medication. If levels are too high, you may be told to avoid or limit high potassium foods.
Digoxin	Slows heart rate. Helps heart pump more blood with each beat so that more oxygen to get to the body.	Slow hear rate, yellow tinted vision, loss of appetite, stomach pain, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea, heart rhythm problems, tiredness or weakness	Call your doctor if you have side effects. They may need to check the level of medication in your blood.
Hydralazine and Nitrates	Lowers blood pressure and decreases how hard the heart has to work.	Dizziness, fast heart rate, headache, lupus, swelling in the legs, nausea and vomiting, flushing	Call your doctor if you have side effects.
Blood Thinner	Helps to prevent clots.	Bloody/black stools, coughing up blood, red/dark brown urine, and unusual bruising or bleeding	Do not skip doses, keep diet consistent, take medication around the same time every day.
Potassium Supplement	Replaces potassium that is lost due to the water pill.	Heartburn, diarrhea, dizziness, weakness or heaviness in the legs, tingling in the hands and feet, rash	May cause stomach upset, take with food to prevent stomach upset, drink a lot of water if no fluid restriction, avoid caffeinated liquids.