

Understanding Heart Failure

SMOG Grade: 11.35

Common Causes of Heart Failure

Your heart's pumping power is weaker than normal. It *fails* to deliver the amount of blood needed to meet your body's demands.

- ❖ Lack of Oxygen Reaching the Heart Muscle
- ❖ Leaky Valves
- ❖ Damaged Heart Muscle
- ❖ Damaged Ventricles
- ❖ Irregular Heart Beat

What Heart Failure Does To Your Body

Since the heart is not pumping enough blood to your organs and muscles, your body cannot do as much and you may have some uncomfortable signs and symptoms.

- ❖ Fatigue
- ❖ Increase in cough
- ❖ Difficulty breathing during daily activity or when lying flat
- ❖ Need extra pillows to sleep comfortably at night
- ❖ Swelling in your feet, ankles, legs, fingers, or abdomen
- ❖ Weight gain, 3 to 5 pounds, over 24 hours
- ❖ More urination at night and less during the day
- ❖ Tell Your Doctor At Once If You Have Any Of These Symptoms

What Treatment Can Do For Your Heart Failure

While heart failure can't be cured, it can be treated so that you may still lead a satisfying life. Heart failure medications may help you feel better.

- ❖ Your treatment may...
- ❖ Reduce fatigue, shortness of breath, and swelling
- ❖ Maintain and restore your energy
- ❖ Reduce further damage or progression of heart failure
- ❖ Help you continue to enjoy life

Understanding Heart Failure Con't.

What Can You Do At Home To Avoid Problems With Fluid Overload

- ❖ Weigh Daily and Record
 - A) Get up in the morning
 - B) Empty Bladder
 - C) Step on Scale
 - D) Record
- ❖ Maintain a low Sodium Diet
- ❖ Limit Fluids Intake

How to Help Reduce Your Overall Risk of a Heart Attack

To help reduce your overall risk of having a heart attack you must do things that keep your blood vessels healthy – not clogged, narrowed, or damaged.

- ❖ Don't smoke.
- ❖ Control your blood pressure.
- ❖ Maintain your cholesterol at healthy levels.
- ❖ Eat sensibly, and watch your weight.
- ❖ Exercise regularly (check with your physician before you begin an exercise program)
- ❖ Maintain emotional stability
- ❖ Take prescribed medications

Sodium Savvy

The doctor has asked that you restrict sodium to assist in controlling your heart failure. The following are basic tips to begin limiting your sodium intake.

Do's

- ❖ Take the salt shaker off your table. There is already enough salt in natural & processed foods.
- ❖ Use low salt seasonings such as allspice, chili powder, curry powder, dill, fennel, lemon, onion, pepper, and vinegar sparingly.
- ❖ Substitute fresh vegetables and other low sodium foods for canned or processed foods.
- ❖ Always read food labels and become a more alert consumer.
- ❖ Always check with your physician before using a "salt substitute" or "lite salt" since these often contain extra potassium that may or may not be appropriate for you.

Don'ts

- ❖ Avoid seasonings that taste salty (soy sauce)
- ❖ Avoid regular canned soups or broths. You may use low sodium soups.
- ❖ Avoid processed meats such as bacon, ham, or bologna. You may use 5-6 ounces lean, fresh meat daily.
- ❖ Avoid seasonings and preservatives containing sodium such as MSG (monosodium glutamate)
- ❖ Avoid bottled water, so-called "softened water" that contains extra sodium.
- ❖ Avoid indigestion and headache remedies that contain sodium bicarbonate or sodium carbonate.

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size 1/2 cut (114g)
Servings Per Container 4

Amount Per Serving

Calories 90 Calories from Fat 30

% Daily Value*

Total Fat 3g **5%**

Saturated Fat 0g **0%**

Cholesterol 0mg **0%**

Sodium 300mg **13%**

Total Carbohydrate 13g **4%**

Dietary Fiber 3g **12%**

Sugars 3g

Protein 3g

Vitamin A 80% • Vitamin C 60%

Calcium 4% • Iron 4%

* Percent Daily Values are based on a 2000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.

	Calories	2,000	2,500
Total Fat	Less than	65g	80G
Sat Fat	Less than	20g	25g
Cholesterol	Less than	300mg	300mg
Sodium	Less than	2,400mg	2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate		300g	375g
Fiber		25g	30g

Calories per gram:

Fat 9 • Carbohydrate 4 • Protein 4

More nutrients may be listed on some labels.

Sodium

You call it "salt," the label calls it "sodium." Either way, it may add up to high blood pressure in some people. So, keep your sodium intake low – 2,300 to 3,000 mg or less each day.*

- ❖ Sodium makes the body retain fluid, forcing the body to work even harder.
- ❖ Salt is a major source of sodium.
- ❖ Reducing sodium will help reduce excess fluid in your body.

* The AHA recommends no more than 3,000 mg sodium per day for healthy adults.

-- American Heart Association

High Sodium Foods to Avoid

FOOD GROUP	FOODS TO AVOID	
Meat or Substitute 5-7 Ounces Lean Fresh Daily Allowed	Ham Kosher Meats Caviar Sausage Anchovies Salt Port Cheese Sardines	Frankfurters Canadian Bacon Smoked Tongue Pickled Herring Luncheon Meats Chipped Beef Salted and Dried Cod Canned Fish or Poultry Regular Peanut Butter (Limit 2 TBS per day) Processed Cheese or Cheese Spreads
Bread and Cereal	Pretzels Corn chips Crackers Crackers with salted top	Snack mixes made from dry cereal Commercial Bread Stuffings Bread and Rolls with salt toppings Salted Popcorn
Vegetables 2 Servings or More Daily	Pickles Relishes Oliver V-8 Juice	Sauerkraut Tomato Juice Tomato Paste Spaghetti Sauce (May Use Salt-Free Tomato Products)
Fruit 3 or More Servings Daily	No restrictions	
Potato or Substitute	Salted Potato Chips Frozen Potato Products Commercial Potato Products (Such as Augratin Potatoes) Commercial Starch Products (Such as Rice-A-Roni and Macaroni & Cheese)	
Fat	Bacon Salted Pork	Salted Nuts Bottled or Dry Salad Dressings and Dips
Soup	Dried Soup Mixes Commercial Frozen or Canned	Bouillon Cubes or Powder (May use Salt-Free Soups or Bouillon)
Desserts and Sweets	Those Made With Salted Nuts	
Miscellaneous	Meat Sauce Lite Salt TV Dinners Soy Sauce Salt Chili Sauce Mug-O-Lunch Canned Stews	Meat Tenderizers Seasoned Salt Catsup (Use Sparingly) Imitation Bacon Bits Monosodium Glutamate Cooking Wines Pizza (Frozen or Commercial) Prepared Horseradish or Mustard Canned, Packaged or Frozen Entrees

Recommended

FOOD GROUP	FOODS RECOMMENDED
Breads (6-11 servings)	Hard rolls or dinner rolls Unsalted saltines Unsalted pretzels, hard or soft Wheat, rye, pumpernickel, white, or lite bread Air-popped popcorn without added salt Low-salt snack chips and snack crackers Old fashioned cooked cereal without added salt Low-sodium dry cereal wheat biscuits, puffed rice and wheat Bread crumbs, low sodium or homemade Low-sodium homemade stuffing Wheat Germ Cornmeal
Potatoes	White or sweet potatoes, no salt added
Pasta	Noodles, spaghetti, macaroni, other pastas
Rice & other Grains	Brown, wild & enriched rice Barley, couscous, other grains
Fruits (2-4 servings)	Fresh, frozen, or canned Fruit juices
Vegetables (3-5 servings)	Fresh or frozen Low sodium canned
Dairy	Skim, 1%, 2% Milk Yogurt Non-fat dry milk
Proteins (6 oz. Daily)	Fresh or frozen lean Beef Poultry Veal Wild game Lamb Fish
Eggs	Limit to 3 egg yolks/week Egg white & substitutes Egg substitutes
Cheese	Low-sodium
	Dried beans & peas Peanut butter, low sodium
Fats (limit salted soft margarine to 3 tsp./day)	Unsalted soft margarine Low-sodium salad dressings
Soups	Low-sodium canned soup Low-sodium commercial broth & bouillon Homemade soup made without added salt Cream soups without salt and within milk allowance
Desserts	Desserts made with milk should be counted in milk allowance
Miscellaneous	Herbs and spices Vinegar Mrs. Dash Mrs. Dash Coating Mix One tsp. On occasion of the following: Low-sodium soy sauce Hot pepper sauce Low-sodium catsup Low sodium chili sauce Low-sodium mustard Lemon or lime juice Flavoring and extracts Tone's Perc Seasonings

Dining Out Tips For A Sodium Restricted Diet

Today, more and more restaurants offer healthy meal choices for their customers. Many have special menus or will honor special requests. Call ahead to find out. When you arrive, tell your waiter or waitress that you cannot have any salt on your food.

What should I order?

- ❖ Ask the server to make substitutions like having steamed vegetables instead of french fries.
- ❖ Use the basic guidelines of your healthy eating plan when choosing a main dish. Pick fish or chicken in place of fatty meats.
- ❖ Make sure your entrée is broiled, baked, grilled, steamed or poached instead of fried.
- ❖ Order lots of vegetable side dishes and ask that any sauces or butter be left off.
- ❖ Squeeze lemon on your salad instead of dressing.
- ❖ Ask for baked, boiled or roast potatoes instead of fried. And ask for them without the butter and sour cream.
- ❖ Order fresh fruit or fruit sorbet in place of cake, pie or ice cream desserts.
- ❖ Ask about low-fat or fat-free choices.
- ❖ When it seems that everything on the menu is "off limits," ask if the chef will make you a fruit or vegetable platter. Most are happy to do it.

What should I avoid?

- ❖ Push the butter out of the way – or ask that it be removed.
- ❖ Order your dressings and sauces on the side, so you can control how much you use.
- ❖ Ask that your food be made without butter or cream sauces.
- ❖ Take the skin off poultry when it arrives, and remove visible fat from meat.
- ❖ Stay away from fried appetizers or creamy soups and begin your meal with broth based soups like minestrone or gazpacho instead.
- ❖ When at a salad bar, stay away from high-fat items like cheese, cream dressings, chopped eggs, croutons, olives and bacon bits.

Dining Out Tips For a Sodium Restricted Diet Con't.

What About Fast Food?

Below are some comparisons of sodium in Fast Food:

Restaurant	Food Item	Sodium (milligrams)
ARBY'S	Regular Roast Beef Sandwich	588
	French Dip N' Swiss Sandwich	1078
Burger King	Hamburger	505
	Whopper with Cheese	1177
Hardee's	Real Lean Deluxe Burger	650
	Bacon Cheeseburger	1030
Kentucky Fried Chicken	Extra Tasty Crispy Center Breast	790
McDonald's	Chicken Fajitas	310
	Quarter Pounder with Cheese	1090
Wendy's	Single Plain Hamburger	500
	Chicken Club Sandwich	930

Fluid

FLUID MEASUREMENT

1 CUP = 8 OUNCES = 240 cc
½ CUP = 4 OUNCES = 120 cc
¼ CUP = 2 OUNCES = 60 cc
2 TBS = 1 OUNCE = 30 cc

EXAMPLES OF FLUIDS:

- ❖ Popsicle, 1 whole = 80 cc
- ❖ Ice Cubes (size may vary; let 2 ice cubes melt in an 8 oz. measuring cup and determine fluid content)
- ❖ Ice Cream or sherbet (1/2 cup = 120 cc fluid)
- ❖ Gelatin (1/2 cup = 120 cc fluid)
- ❖ Soup
- ❖ Coffee, Tea, Hot Chocolate
- ❖ Cream
- ❖ Low Salt Vegetable or Fruit Juices
- ❖ Soda Pop
- ❖ Alcohol
- ❖ Water (including that taken with pills)

Your Health Care Provider may set a limit on the amount of liquid you can have.

Drinking too many liquids may force your heart to work harder.

To keep your mouth from getting dry, suck on hard candy and use a humidifier.

The Importance of Potassium

In general, a diet rich in potassium may be very important to good health. Potassium is essential for proper body growth and function. It also maintains the electrical stability of your heart and nervous system.

Diuretics are one of the most common causes of potassium loss. If you are taking a diuretic you must strive to keep potassium intake high unless otherwise instructed by your doctor.

Good Sources of Potassium are:

Dried beans
Lentil

Peas
Low Sodium Peanut Butter

Vegetables:

Asparagus
Avocado
Broccoli
Brussel Sprouts
Kohlrabi
Cooked Soybeans
Turnips

Parsnips
Potatoes
Pumpkin
Spinach
Sweet Potatoes
Tomatoes (Raw, Cooked, Canned, Salt Free)
Winter Squash

Fruits:

Apricots
Banana
Cantaloupe
Fruit Cocktail
Grapefruit
Honeydew
Kiwi
Nectarines
Oranges

Peaches
Pears
Prunes
Raspberries
Raisins (2 TBS)
Rhubarb
Strawberries
Watermelon

Beverages:

Coffee
Tea
Hot Cocoa
Tang
Gatorade

Fruit Juices
Tomato Juice
V 8
Above Fruits

Energy Conservation Tips

Tasks

- ❖ Space hard tasks and easy tasks throughout the day and/or week.
- ❖ Allow ample time to complete each task so you do not have to hurry.
- ❖ Keep tasks simple.
- ❖ Eliminate unnecessary work.
- ❖ Assemble equipment/materials first.
- ❖ Sit whenever possible, using both arms close to the body with slow, smooth motions.
- ❖ Work in a well-ventilated room.

Activities of Daily Living

- ❖ Sit to dress and undress.
- ❖ Consider sitting to shave, brush teeth, and comb hair.
- ❖ Long-handled reachers are helpful for pulling on socks and shoes. An Occupational Therapist can provide instruction on proper use of long-handled reachers.
- ❖ Sit on a bench to breathe.
- ❖ Use warm, not hot water.
- ❖ Dry off by wrapping yourself in a terry cloth robe.

Cooking

- ❖ Use lightweight, nonstick pots and pans to cook.
- ❖ Air dry dishes or use a dishwasher.
- ❖ Slide pots from sink to range.
- ❖ Select equipment that can be used for more than one job (i.e., Pyrex bowls for storage, serving, mixing, or baking).

Shopping

- ❖ Ask that grocery bags be packed so they are light and easy to carry.

Physical Activity

- ❖ Take 30-minute rest periods after meals and throughout the day.
- ❖ Maintain a good posture.
- ❖ A moderate, steady pace is most productive.
- ❖ During hot, humid weather, a slower pace may be necessary.
- ❖ Avoid unnecessary bending, stretching, reaching, and walking. (Keeping things at waist level will prevent excessive bending or reaching.)

Carrying/Lifting

- ❖ Use a cart or table on wheels to transport items rather than carry heavy items.

Helpful Hints for a Good Night's Sleep

- ❖ Use pillows to prop up your head to make breathing easier.
- ❖ Avoid eating a big meal just before going to bed.
- ❖ Listen to relaxing music.
- ❖ Drink warm herbal tea.
- ❖ Avoid exciting TV programs when sleep is interrupted during the night.
- ❖ Try to avoid "little naps" in the evening since they can disturb your ability to fall asleep when bedtime arrives.
- ❖ Ask your doctor regarding a change in the time you take your medication (especially diuretics). It may prevent the need for frequent urination during the night.

Helpful Hints for Reducing Stress

- ❖ Talk to your Health Care Provider about medication, visualization, massage, breathing techniques, biofeedback, counseling, support groups, stress management course, etc.
- ❖ Volunteer activities, hobbies, taking classes and exercising may also help reduce stress.

SITTING EXERCISES

1. **ANKLE PUMPS** – Sitting at edge of bed, (EOB) or in a chair, with your back erect and feet flat on the floor; push down on your toes as you lift your heels off the floor as far as you can, then return your feet to starting position and lift your toes off the floor. Repeat ten times.



2. **KNEE EXTENSION** – Sitting at EOB, or in a chair, with your back erect and feet flat on floor; straighten your right leg without lifting your thigh off the surface on which you are sitting as you exhale, return your leg to the starting position as you inhale. Repeat ten times. Perform same exercise with your left leg.



3. **HIP/KNEE FLEXION** – Sitting at EOB, or in a chair, with your back erect and feet flat on the floor; raise your right knee up towards your chest as you exhale, lower your leg back to the starting position as you inhale. Repeat ten times. Perform same exercise with left leg.



4. **TRUNK ROTATIONS** – Sitting at EOB, or in a chair, with your back erect, feet on the floor and hands on your hips; as you exhale, turn your upper body and head as far toward the right as you can. As you inhale, turn back to the starting position. Then as you exhale, turn toward the left and return to the starting position as you inhale. Repeat for a total of ten turns in each direction.



5. **SHOULDER FLEXION** – Sitting on the EOB, or in a chair, with your back erect, feet on the floor and arms down to your sides; lift your right arm straight up and over your head as far as possible while you inhale, return your arm to times. Perform same exercise with your left arm.



6. **SHOULDER ABDUCTION** –

Sitting at EOB, or in a chair, with your back erect, feet on the floor and arms down at your sides; move your right arm out from your side and up over your head as you inhale, return your arm to your side as you exhale. Repeat ten times. Perform same exercise with your left arm.



7. **SHOULDER CIRCLES** – Sitting at EOB, or in a chair, with your back erect, feet on the floor, and hands on your shoulders; make ten circles forward and ten circles backward with your elbows.



Managing Your Medications

Take your medications regularly and know what you are taking.

Heart failure drugs are used to reduce your symptoms and the limitations imposed on your heart. Unfortunately, one of the most common reasons for heart failure symptoms (at times leading to hospitalization) is failure to take medication properly. You must follow your doctor's instructions exactly. Knowing why medications are used, how they should be taken, and how they work will help you appreciate the importance of following your doctor's recommendations.

How can I remember to take my medicine?

- ❖ Carry a medication list.
- ❖ Know the names and doses of what you are taking.
- ❖ Take it at the same time every day.
- ❖ Take it along with meals or other daily events, like brushing your teeth.
- ❖ Ask the people who are close to you to help remind you.
- ❖ Put a sticker or reminder note on your medicine cabinet or refrigerator.
- ❖ Keep a "medicine calendar" near your medicine and note every time you take a dose.
- ❖ Use special pillboxes that help you keep track, like the day-of-the-week divided ones you find at any drugstore.
- ❖ Don't take medications in the dark. The wrong medication might be taken.

Check with your physician before taking any over the counter medications or herbal medications.

- ❖ If you are started on arthritis medications, please notify your heart failure clinic.

ACE (angiotensin-converting enzyme) Inhibitors

Other Names:

Capoten (captopril)
Vasotec (enalapril)
Zestril (lisinopril)
Prinivil (lisinopril)
Monopril (fosinopril)
Lotensin (benazepril)
Accupril (quinapril)

Purpose:

ACE inhibitors belong to the class of medicines called high blood pressure medicines (antihypertensives). They are used to treat high blood pressure. High blood pressure adds to the workload of the heart and arteries. If it continues for a long time, the heart and arteries may not function properly. This can damage the blood vessels of the brain, heart, and kidneys, resulting in a stroke, heart failure, or kidney failure. These problems may be less likely to occur if blood pressure is controlled.

These medicines are also used to treat congestive heart failure. They block an enzyme in the body that is necessary to produce a substance that causes blood vessels to tighten. As a result, they relax blood vessels. This lowers blood pressure and increases the supply a blood and oxygen to the heart.

Administration/Dosage:

Capoten is available in 12.5 mg, 25 mg, 50 mg and 100 mg tablets.

Vasotec is available in 2.5 mg, 5 mg, 10 mg and 20 mg tablets.

Zestril and Prinivil are available 5 mg, 10 mg and 20 mg tablets.

Monopril is available in 10 mg, 20 mg, and 40 mg tablets.

Lotensin is available in 5 mg, 10 mg, 20 mg and 40 mg tablets.

Accupril is available in 5 mg, 10 mg, 20 mg and 40 mg tablets.

Most of these drugs are a once a day dosage. However, Capoten is prescribed two to three times a day. If taking Capoten it is best to take this one hour before meals. The other meds it doesn't make a difference. If taking Monopril and antacids they should be administered two hours apart.

Side effects:

Headache, dizziness, lightheadedness, fatigue, decreased blood pressure upon standing, passing out, chest pain, increased heart rate, abnormal blood results, nausea, vomiting, dry mouth, impotence, decreased libido, a dry persistent cough.

Digoxin

Other Names:

Digoxin/Lanoxicaps/Lanoxin

Purpose:

It helps make the heart more efficient and it is thought to strengthen each heart contraction. It also helps to keep your heart in a regular rhythm.

You have been instructed to take this medication because you may have a history of an irregular heart rhythm such as atrial fibrillation. This medication is also used in people with a history of congestive heart failure. In those people, they may not have a history of an irregular rhythm.

Administration/Dosage:

Lanoxin is usually given in strengths of 0.25 mg, 0.125 mg, and sometimes in 0.375 mg.

Take it at the same time each day. If you miss a dose do not double up on it the next day, take as directed.

Side effects:

Fatigue, generalized muscle weakness, yellow-green halos around visual images, blurred vision, nausea, decreased appetite, and vomiting/diarrhea.

Special instructions:

When you are on a scheduled dosage of antacids, schedule the doses as far as possible from lanoxin administration. Medications that could potentiate the effect of lanoxin include: amiodarone or cordarone, scopolamine, quinidine, diltiazem, procordia, and verapamil.

Before taking, obtain your pulse for a full minute (or 30 seconds Times 2). Report to the doctor if your pulse is less than 50 beats per minute.

Diuretics (water pill)

Names:

- Furosemide (Lasix)
- Ethacrynic acid (Edecrin)
- Bumetanide (Bumex)
- Spiroinolactone (Aldactone)
- Zaroxolyn (Metolazone)
- Demadex (Torseamide)

Purpose:

These drugs are given to help reduce the amount of water in the body. They work by acting on the kidneys to increase the flow of urine. You have been instructed to take this medication because of fluid retention, which is a symptom of congestive heart failure.

Administration/Dosage:

- Lasix is available in 20 mg, 40 mg and 80 mg.
- Edecrin is available in 25 mg and 50 mg.
- Bumex is available in 0.5 mg, 1 mg and 2 mg.
- Spiroinolactone is available in 25 mg.
- Zaroxolyn is available in 2.5 mg and 5.0 mg.
- Demadex is available in 5mg, 10mg, 20mg, and 100mg.

You may be instructed to take these in small or large amounts, one to two times a day. Take as directed by your physician. If this medicine upsets your stomach, it may be taken with meals or milk. If you miss a dose, take it as soon as possible. Do not double dose, unless instructed.

Side effects:

Dry mouth, increased thirst, dizziness or lightheadedness, dehydration, transient deafness, muscle cramps or pain and unusual tiredness or weakness.

Special instructions:

If you have diabetes, diuretics may increase the amount of sugar in your blood, monitor your blood levels carefully. When taking diuretics in conjunction to drugs such as Capoten, inflammatory agents, these may cause elevated kidney blood levels. They also cause depletion of potassium. You will have blood levels drawn periodically to evaluate this. Unless instructed otherwise you should eat foods that are rich in potassium such as citrus fruits, tomatoes, bananas, dates and apricots. Lasix may cause your skin to be more sensitive to sunlight. Exposure may cause a skin rash, itching, redness or other discoloration of the skin or a severe sunburn.

Angiotensin II Antagonists

Other Names:

Avapro ® (Irbesartan)
Cozaar ® (Losartan)
Diovan ® (Valsartan)
Atacand ® (Candesartan)
Micardis ® (Telmisartan)

Purpose:

Angiotensin II antagonists are a new class of medication, which helps, control Hypertension. How do they work? When the heart fails to adequately pump blood and oxygen to the body, the kidneys recognize this as low blood flow and respond by releasing a chemical, which helps increase the blood pressure. Angiotensin II antagonists block the chemical process which increases blood pressure. These drugs decrease blood pressure so that less pressure and strain are exerted on the heart. Angiotensin II antagonists have a lower incidence of side effects (such as coughing) than ACE inhibitors.

Administration/Dosing:

Avapro ® is available in 75mg, 150mg, and 300mg.
Cozaar ® is available in 25 mg and 50mg.
Diovan ® is available in 80mg and 160mg.
Atacand ® is available in 16 – 32 mg.
Micardis ® is available in 40 – 80 mg.

Most of these medications are taken once daily. They can be taken with food or without. Use caution when first starting these medications, sudden rising or standing can cause dizziness. Try to take your medication at the same time each day for the best results.

Side Effects:

This new class of medication is a great alternative for patients who cannot tolerate ACE inhibitors. This class of medication does have some side effects such as diarrhea, stomach upset, dizziness, fatigue, muscle pain, or cough (these are rare).

Special Instructions:

If you take an over-the-counter medication or prescription medication such as Tagamet®, Phenobarbital®, or ketoconazole, these drugs may increase levels of Angiotensin II antagonists. Ask your pharmacist or doctor if you are currently taking these or plan to take any other over-the-counter products. Remember to count to ten before standing or sitting up when first starting this medication. This will avoid dizziness. The dizziness will eventually go away as your body gets accustomed to the medication. If you notice any difficulty in breathing, swelling, swallowing, or sore throat, contact your physician.

Beta Blockers

Other Names:

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

Purpose:

These medications are given to decrease the amount of work that your heart must do to pump blood through your body. You have what we call beta receptors in your heart and blood vessels. When we give you beta blockers, they stop what the beta receptors are doing, similar to stopping electricity by turning off a light switch. By turning off the beta receptors your heart slows down, causing your blood pressure to go down which reduces how hard your heart must work. Over time beta blockers improve enlargement of your heart.

Administration/Dosing:

Beta blockers are available in a variety of strengths. Although more than ten (10) beta blockers are available, only three (3) have been found effective in CHF. These include metoprolol, bisoprolol, and carvedilol. Initially, symptoms may appear worse as your heart responds to the medication. Between 10 and 14 weeks, you should feel improvement in your symptoms. These medications should be taken at the same time every day and can be taken at whatever time is most convenient for you. They can be taken at the same time as your other medications. Carvedilol should be taken with a meal. If you miss a dose, take it as soon as you remember, but do not take two at once.

Side Effects:

Most patients tolerate beta blockers very well. Some possible side effects include: fatigue, dizziness, low blood pressure, cold hands/feet, nausea, dreaming, depression, impotence, changes in blood sugar, or shortness of breath.

Special Instructions:

If you have diabetes, beta blockers can cause low blood sugar and prevent your usual symptoms of it. When you first start taking these drugs you may feel lightheaded when standing up. This should go away after your body gets used to the medicine and it is helpful to stand up slowly, especially after lying down. Do not suddenly stop taking the medication without discussing it with your physician. Consult your physician or pharmacist before taking any cold or allergy medications.

NOTES

