

# Angiotensin II Receptor Blockers

Angiotensin II receptor blockers (ARBs) are also called angiotensin II receptor antagonists. These medicines protect blood vessels from the narrowing caused by a substance the body produces called angiotensin II. ARBs help keep the blood vessels relaxed and expanded so blood pressure goes down.



---

## *How They're Used*

ARBs are available in tablet form, taken either once or twice every day, depending on the drug chosen by your doctor and your particular needs.

Your doctor may want you to take an ARB in addition to another type of medicine called a diuretic, which removes excess water and sodium from the body. Many people require two or more medicines to bring their blood pressure to a healthy level.

---

## *Side Effects*

ARBs can sometimes cause dizziness, diarrhea, and lack of sexual desire. These side effects may go away during treatment, but talk with your doctor if they are a problem. More serious side effects are fainting (especially when sitting up or standing up); chest pain; continuing headache; swelling of the arms, legs, face, or tongue; and muscle weakness or pain. Let your doctor know right away if you experience any of these side effects.

---

## *Special Notes*

ARBs may make some people dizzy or drowsy. So, be sure you know how this medicine affects you before driving or using machines.

Treatment for high blood pressure may include controlling weight and limiting the amount of sodium (salt) in your diet. Follow your doctor's advice about weight and food.

Since many people with high blood pressure don't experience any symptoms of their condition, it's important to take medication exactly as prescribed and to see your doctor regularly, even if you feel fine.

Left untreated, high blood pressure can lead to serious heart problems, stroke, and kidney disease. While medicine won't cure high blood pressure, it does help control it. That's why you need to take it—possibly for the rest of your life—to manage your blood pressure.

Do not stop taking an ARB without checking with your doctor. You may need to gradually reduce the amount of medicine you take before stopping completely.

Some medicines you can buy without a prescription might *increase* your blood pressure. This is especially true for products intended for appetite control, asthma, colds, cough, hay fever, or sinus problems. Don't take these or any other medicines without discussing it with your doctor.

### Tips for Taking This Medicine

- Take your ARB medicine exactly as prescribed, as often as directed, without skipping any doses—even if you feel fine
- Before having any kind of surgery (including dental surgery) or emergency treatment, tell the doctor or dentist in charge that you are taking an ARB
- Make sure you have enough medication on hand to last through weekends, holidays, or vacations
- Make sure your doctor knows about any allergies and any other medical problems you have, especially kidney or liver disease, or heart conditions

**USE IN PREGNANCY:** When used in pregnancy during the second and third trimesters, drugs that act directly on the renin-angiotensin system can cause injury and even death to the developing fetus. When pregnancy is detected, ARBs should be discontinued as soon as possible.

# Remember

Blood pressure treatment begins with lifestyle changes such as weight management; exercise; a low-salt, healthy diet; stopping smoking; and decreased alcohol intake. Even if you take medicine to help lower your blood pressure, you still need to make lifestyle changes recommended by your doctor.