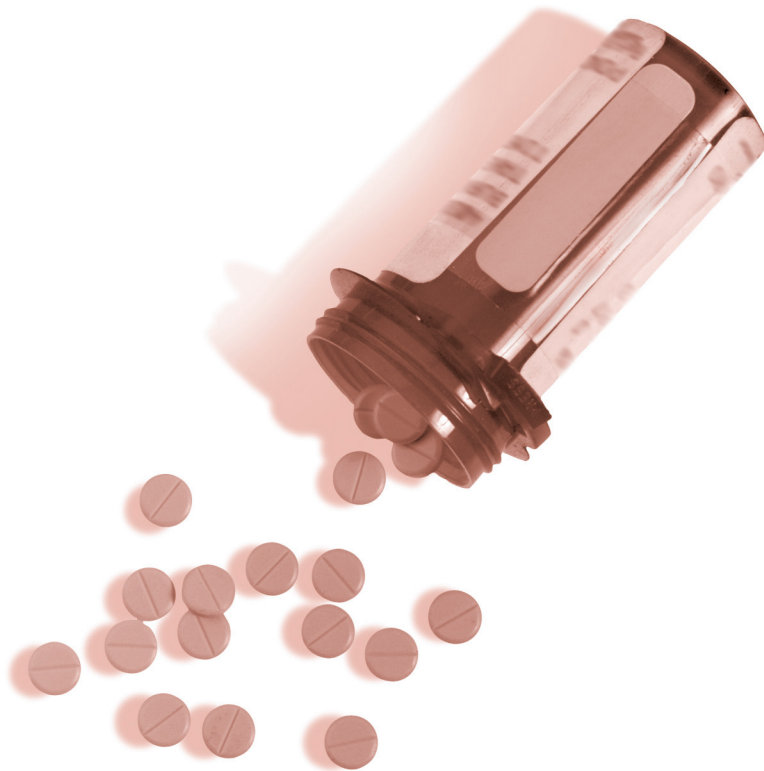


Diuretics

Diuretics help wash extra sodium and water from the body. Diuretics are sometimes called “water pills” because they help the body get rid of extra water. Recommended for most people who start taking medicine for controlling high blood pressure, diuretics are often prescribed in combination with other medicines.



How They're Used

Diuretics come in several forms including tablets, capsules, and liquid. How often you take this medicine depends on the form and the dosage. It can vary from every 6 hours to every other day.

Your doctor may prescribe a diuretic alone or in combination with another type of medicine such as an ACE (angiotensin-converting enzyme) inhibitor, an ARB (angiotensin-receptor blocker), a beta-blocker, or a calcium channel blocker. Many people require two or more medicines to bring their blood pressure to a healthy level.



Side Effects

When you first start taking a diuretic, you may feel tired and notice that you're urinating more, or more often. These effects should decrease as you continue taking the medication. If a change in urination affects your sleep, talk with your doctor about planning the best time to take your medicine.

Other side effects may include diarrhea, dizziness when sitting or standing up, loss of appetite, and upset stomach. Check with your doctor if side effects continue or become a problem. Some rare side effects should be reported to your doctor right away. They include blood in urine, fever, dry mouth, and confusion.

Special Notes

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.

Diuretics may cause your body to lose potassium, which may make you feel weak or experience muscle cramps. If this happens, your doctor may recommend that you drink citrus-fruit juices, take a potassium supplement, or take another medicine to prevent potassium loss.

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 diuretic medicine exactly as prescribed, as often as directed, at the same time or times each day
- If you forget a dose, take it as soon as you remember. However, if it is almost time for your next dose, skip the missed dose, and go back to your regular schedule. Do not double dose
- 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 diabetes, gout, or lupus
- Be sure to tell your doctor if you are pregnant or become pregnant while taking this or any other medicine. Diuretics taken during pregnancy can cause jaundice, blood problems, and low potassium in the newborn

Remember

Treatment for high blood pressure begins with lifestyle changes: 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.