

# Beta-Blockers

Beta-blockers are drugs that are prescribed for heart failure, a condition where the heart has difficulty pumping enough blood to meet the body's needs. Beta-blockers not only can improve heart function, but may also reduce your risk of hospitalization, help you feel better, and prolong your life.



---

## *How They're Used*

Beta-blockers come in several forms, including tablets and capsules. Not all beta-blockers are approved by the FDA for use in heart failure. Talk to your doctor about which is best for you.

Patients are usually started on a low dose of a beta-blocker, and the dose is gradually increased over time as needed.

Your doctor may also prescribe additional medicines to treat your heart condition such as

- Diuretics (water pills) to reduce the amount of extra salt and fluid in the body
- ACE inhibitors to open up blood vessels and make it easier for the heart to pump blood to various organs
- Digitalis (digoxin) to increase the strength of the heartbeat

---

## *Side Effects*

Patients sometimes experience side effects when they start taking beta-blockers, or when their dosage is increased. Symptoms may include fatigue, dizziness, fluid retention, or shortness of breath. Let your doctor know if you experience any of these side effects, but do not stop taking the medicine without first checking with your doctor.

---

## *Special Notes*

You must see your doctor regularly while using a beta-blocker, so that your progress can be checked, and your dosage changed if necessary.

Do not stop taking this medicine without first checking with your doctor. Your doctor may want you to gradually reduce the amount you are taking before stopping completely. Some conditions may become worse when the medicine is stopped suddenly, and the danger of heart attack is increased in some patients.

### *Tips for Taking This Medicine*

Make sure that you have enough medicine on hand to last through weekends, holidays or vacations. You may want to carry an extra written prescription with you in case of an emergency.

Before taking beta-blocker medicines, it's important for your doctor to know about any allergies you have, what other medicines you are taking, and whether you have any other medical problems, especially bronchitis and emphysema.

You must take a beta-blocker exactly as prescribed, even though you may feel fine. Consult with your doctor ahead of time about how to handle missing a dose of your medicine.

- Take your beta-blocker medicine exactly as prescribed, as often as prescribed
- Before having any kind of surgery (including dental surgery) or emergency treatment, advise the doctor or dentist that you are taking a beta-blocker
- If you have any questions or concerns about any of your medicines, ask your doctor right away



# Remember

For patients with heart failure, the goal of beta-blocker therapy is to help them live longer and feel better. Be sure to take your medicine exactly as prescribed, and see your doctor regularly so your progress can be checked.