

# Medications Used to Treat Heart Failure

Medications are a very important part of heart failure treatment.

One of the best things you can do to help manage your heart failure is to take your medications exactly as prescribed.

*“I do it at pretty much the same time every morning. I get up, I have the same routine. It’s after breakfast, so as soon as I eat breakfast, I take all of my medications. I have a drawer where I keep them all. They’re all lined up ready to go.”*

There are several types of medications for your heart failure. Most heart failure patients take more than one medication.

Your list of medications will depend on your type of heart failure, how severe it is, your symptoms, and any other conditions you have.

This is why it’s so important to carefully track your symptoms and medical history. Your healthcare provider needs this information to create a treatment plan that works best for you.

Some common medications used to treat heart failure include beta blockers, ACE Inhibitors, Diuretics, and others.

These medications work together to help your heart beat more efficiently and reduce your symptoms.

ACE Inhibitors, along with ARBs and ARNIs, mainly work to widen your blood vessels and lower your blood pressure.

This can help decrease the workload on your heart.

You may also be prescribed Beta Blockers.

These medications help slow the heart rate and improve your heart’s ability to relax, which slows the progression of heart failure.

To help reduce fluid build-up, your healthcare provider might prescribe a Diuretic. These are sometimes called water pills.

Diuretics help your kidneys remove excess water and sodium from your blood. This helps reduce swelling.

Another medication you might take is an Aldosterone Antagonist. This medication helps lower blood pressure, reduce excess fluid in your body, and can help slow down the progression of heart failure.

And finally, you may be prescribed Digitalis to improve the heart’s pumping ability and decrease irregular heartbeats.

Like all medications, heart failure medications can have side effects.

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Some common side effects include headaches, fatigue, nausea, loss of appetite, dizziness, lightheadedness, skin rash, abnormal heartbeat, erectile dysfunction, or a cough.

If you experience any of these or other side effects, contact your healthcare provider.

You may need to have your medication changed.

However, do not stop taking any medications without permission from your healthcare provider.

And keep in mind that some possible medication side effects may be similar to your symptoms of heart failure, so be careful. What you are actually feeling can be a sign of an increase in your heart failure symptoms.

Call your healthcare providers and let them know if you have any questions about your symptoms.

A small number of patients may have severe reactions to these drugs. Call your doctor right away, if you have swelling of the face, eyes, lips, tongue or legs.

Immediately call 911 or your emergency response number if you have difficulty breathing, chest pain, irregular heartbeat, can't swallow, or are lightheaded.

Your heart failure medications can also interact with dietary supplements or affect your blood level of potassium and other electrolytes.

Talk to your healthcare provider about whether it's OK to continue taking dietary supplements and whether you should have your potassium levels monitored.

Also, ask your healthcare provider if it's safe for you to take over-the-counter medicines, herbs and other dietary supplements.

You and your healthcare team will work together to find the most effective medication plan for your heart failure management. Be patient, it may take time to find the right plan for you.

*“Taking medications as prescribed is extremely important. Even if you feel great and think you're invincible and don't need medications. It's very important to continue those medicines.”*