

# Heart Failure Medications: Aldosterone Antagonists

You have been prescribed an Aldosterone Antagonist to help manage your heart failure symptoms.

To help you understand what your Aldosterone Antagonist does, let's take a look at how the heart normally works.

The heart is a muscle that pumps oxygen and nutrient rich blood through your body.

With an oxygen rich supply of blood, your body can carry out the normal activities of daily living.

However, when you have heart failure, your weakened heart can't pump enough blood to meet your body's needs.

To make up for the weakness, your heart pumps harder.

Over time, your heart begins to change because of the extra work. The walls become more muscular and your heart may enlarge.

Eventually, your heart can't pump blood efficiently and you may experience symptoms.

Common symptoms of heart failure are caused by a lack of oxygen-rich blood and reduced heart function.

They include fatigue and weakness. You may also become short of breath, especially when you're active.

Heart failure also causes your kidneys to hold onto water and sodium. This increases fluid in your blood vessels and can lead to swelling.

The most common places to experience swelling include your ankles and legs, feet, and waist.

And when the fluid leaks into your lungs it is called pulmonary edema.

Taking your Aldosterone Antagonist medication can help reduce this fluid build-up.

Aldosterone Antagonists block the effect of a hormone called aldosterone. This hormone causes your body to retain salt and water, so when it's blocked, swelling is reduced because sodium and water is released but potassium is retained.

There are several types of these medications available.

Common Aldosterone Antagonists include the medications listed here:

This list includes generic and brand names, but it's important to know that new medications are introduced regularly. Talk to your healthcare provider about which one is right for you.

As with any medication there may be some side effects.

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Some common side effects of Aldosterone Antagonists include...high levels of potassium in your blood. Your healthcare provider will advise you to avoid potassium supplements and foods containing high levels of potassium, including salt-substitutes.

Abnormal heartbeat, frequent urination, fatigue, erectile dysfunction, irregular menstrual periods, tender and enlarged breasts for both men and women, diarrhea and cramping, nausea and vomiting, and dizziness.

If you experience any of these or other side effects, contact your healthcare provider. You may need to have your prescription changed.

If you have difficulty breathing, chest pain, irregular heartbeat, can't swallow, or are lightheaded, immediately call 911 or your emergency response number so an ambulance can be sent.

At your healthcare appointments your healthcare provider will monitor your kidney function and potassium levels to make sure your Aldosterone Antagonist is working safely for you.

An Aldosterone Antagonist may be part of your medication plan to help you feel better and manage your heart failure for the long-term. If you have any questions about taking this medication, talk to your healthcare provider.