

Medicines for Heart Disease

You will likely take several types of medicine for your heart disease. Some of the medicines reduce the chance of heart attack and stroke. Others control blood pressure and cholesterol. You may also take medicines for other heart problems, such as heart failure or irregular heart rhythm (arrhythmia). Other health conditions, such as diabetes, likely also need medicines. Keeping track of your medicines and knowing what each does can get confusing. It's important to understand that all of these medicines need to be taken as prescribed for your best health outcome. Don't stop taking them without talking with your healthcare provider.

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Many people with heart disease take the 4 medicines shown in this chart. Other common medicines are listed later. Your healthcare provider or cardiac rehab team can help you look at the types of medicines that have been prescribed for you.

Type of medicine	What it does
Statin	Lowers the amount of LDL ("bad") cholesterol and other fats in the blood. This lowers the chance of clogged arteries
ACE inhibitor or angiotensin receptor blocker (ARB)	May make your levels of HDL ("good") cholesterol better Lowers blood pressure and eases strain on the heart. This makes it easier for the heart to pump and improves blood flow
Antiplatelet	Helps prevent blood clots. Clots could block an artery and cause a heart attack or stroke
Beta-blocker	Lowers blood pressure and slows heart rate May strengthen the heart's pumping action over time

Other medicines you may take

Type of medicine	What it does
Antiarrhythmic	Helps slow down and regulate a fast or irregular heartbeat (arrhythmia)
Anticoagulant	Helps reduce the risk that a blood clot will form
Antihypertensive	Helps lower blood pressure
Calcium channel blocker	Helps blood flow more easily through the arteries by widening (dilating) them
Diuretic	Helps your body get rid of extra water. This is important if you have high blood pressure or heart failure
Nitrate (nitroglycerin)	Helps prevent and treat angina (chest pain)
Vasodilator	Helps blood flow more easily through the arteries by widening the arteries