

Heart Failure: Taking Prescription and Over-the-Counter Medicines

When you have heart failure, you may be taking a lot of medicines— and not just for your heart failure.

That's why it's important to know that some medicines— both prescription and nonprescription— can affect your heart and make your heart failure worse.

Or they might keep your heart failure medicines from working the way they should.

So you'll need to be careful with prescriptions and with medicines that don't need a prescription— often called over-the-counter, or OTC, medicines.

These OTC medicines include natural health products and vitamins.

And you may need to avoid these over-the-counter medicines: pain relievers, including NSAIDs such as ibuprofen; some cough, cold, flu, and sinus medicines; and some stomach medicines, like antacids or laxatives.

Now, here are some ways you can help your medicines work better for you.

Start by keeping an up-to-date list of every medicine you take.

Bring your list with you to all doctor visits.

And when you fill a new prescription or buy an over-the-counter medicine, show your list to the pharmacist.

Ask if the new medicine is safe to take with your heart failure medicines.

You can also ask your doctor or pharmacist to add to your list the names of OTC medicines that are safe for you to take when you have heart failure.

You can make this list on paper, in your phone, or on your computer.

But it's helpful if you can look at it or share it at your doctor's office or while shopping at the pharmacy.

And it might help to share your list or make a copy for anyone who might buy medicines for you.

When you have heart failure, taking medicines may feel stressful.

But remember that medicines may be used to help you feel better, have a better quality of life, stay out of the hospital, and live longer.

And there are steps you can take to make sure you're taking your medicines safely.

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If you have any questions or concerns about any of your medicines, you can always talk to your doctor or pharmacist.

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