

# Angiotensin II Receptor Blockers (ARBs)

## Most common ARBs

Ask your health care provider to check off the one you are taking.

- Candesartan (Atacand)
- Losartan (Cozaar)
- Valsartan (Diovan)
- Irbesartan (Avapro)
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

## What are ARBs?

ARBs are a group of medications that keep your body from making stress hormones. Stress hormones constrict or narrow blood vessels making it harder for your heart to pump blood around your body.

ARBs cause blood vessels to relax, allowing your blood to flow more easily. This reduces the work of your heart and lowers your blood pressure.

## What are ARBs used for?

Used to treat:

- ♥ Heart failure
- ♥ High blood pressure

ARBs also help:

- ♥ Prevent kidney damage in people with diabetes or at risk for kidney disease
- ♥ The heart recover after a heart attack

## How do ARBs help with heart failure?

ARBs **may**:

- ♥ Slow the progress of your heart failure
- ♥ Help you live longer
- ♥ Improve your quality of life
- ♥ Prevent you from needing to be in the hospital for heart failure treatment

When used as a part of your heart failure treatment plan, along with your other heart failure medications, ARBs

**may** help:

- ♥ Lessen your shortness of breath
- ♥ Reduce the swelling in your legs and belly
- ♥ Increase your energy



## What if you miss taking a dose?


If it is almost time for your next dose, skip taking the dose you missed and just take your next scheduled dose.

Never take two doses at the same time.

If you have questions about taking your medications, or missed doses, contact your pharmacist, your health care provider, or in British Columbia call 8-1-1.

## Do not take any of the following without checking with your health care provider

- ✗ Alcohol
- ✗ Cough or cold medicines
- ✗ Black licorice
- ✗ Herbal or Chinese medicines
- ✗ Aboriginal herbs
- ✗ Anti-inflammatory medicines (such as Advil, Ibuprofen, Motrin, Naproxen, Aleve, Celebrex)

Common Side Effects	What to do
Dizzy Lightheaded 	Get up slowly when changing position such as moving from lying to sitting or sitting to standing.  Contact your health care provider if these side effects continue or get worse  This side effect may be the strongest after your first dose especially if you also take a diuretic
Lowering of blood pressure	Get up slowly when changing position such as moving from lying to sitting or sitting to standing  Contact your health care provider if these side effects continue or get worse.
Diarrhea	Contact your health care provider if it lasts more than 2 days
Serious but not Common Side Effects	What to do
Swelling of your face, lips, tongue Trouble breathing, Difficulty swallowing	Stop taking the ARBs  Contact your doctor right away or go to your nearest emergency department

### Medication Tips

ARBs might make you dizzy or lightheaded for the first few days, but this usually improves over time.

♥ If these symptoms do not get better, your health care provider might need to change the amount of the ARB you are taking

♥ If you have symptoms of low blood pressure, you may want to avoid activities that will lower your blood pressure even further such as:

- ✗ drinking alcohol
- ✗ doing strenuous exercise
- ✗ taking a really hot shower or bath
- ✗ using a hot tub

♥ ARBs could increase the potassium level in your body. Do not take potassium supplements unless prescribed by your health-care provider.

- ♥ Check with your health care provider before using products that contain potassium such as salt substitutes
- ♥ Your health care provider will do a blood test to check your potassium level and kidney function from time to time

♥ Contact your health care provider if you have diarrhea and/or vomiting that lasts more than two days.

- ♥ As it may cause you to lose too much water which could cause problems with your kidneys

**For more information about ARBs, go the HealthLinkBC web site [www.healthlinkbc.ca](http://www.healthlinkbc.ca) or call 8-1-1**

**Do you know?** That it can sometimes take several weeks or months before your symptoms improve and you start to feel better.