



Beta Blockers

Most common Beta Blockers

- Ask your health care provider to check off the one you are taking.
- Bisoprolol (Monacor)
 - Carvedilol (Coreg)
 - Metoprolol (Lopressor)
 - Other _____

What are Beta Blockers?

Beta Blockers are a group of medications that relax the heart muscle and slow down the heart rate. These medications also block the effects of your body's stress hormones. Stress hormones narrow blood vessels making it harder for your heart to pump blood around your body. Blocking your stress hormones relaxes blood vessels, making it easier for your heart to pump.

What are Beta Blockers used for?

- Heart failure
- High blood pressure
- Fast heart rate or irregular heart rhythms
- Angina chest pain
- After a heart attack

How do Beta Blockers help with heart failure?

Beta Blockers can:

- Lower your blood pressure so your heart doesn't have to work as hard
- Slow the progress of your heart failure
- Improve your quality of life
- Help you live longer

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 or your health care provider. In British Columbia, you can also 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 products
- ✗ Chinese medicines
- ✗ Anti-inflammatory medicines (such as Advil, Ibuprofen, Motrin, Naproxen, Aleve, Celebrex)
- ✗ Other medicines you can buy at a pharmacy

Health care provider contact information

Did you know? It can take several weeks, and sometimes months, before you notice your heart failure improving and you start feeling better.

Did you know? People often feel worse for the first 1 to 2 weeks after starting beta blockers or after the dose is changed. You might feel more tired than usual, or notice your heart failure symptoms are worse.

Common Side Effects

If you get any of these side effects, talk with your health care provider about how best to deal with them.
Contact your health care provider if any of these side effects do not go away or get worse.

Feeling tired all the time



Dizzy or lightheaded

A very slow heart rate (medication slows down your heart too much) – can make you feel dizzy



Short of breath or trouble breathing



Cold hands or feet

Numbness or tingling in your hands or feet

Changes in mood

Feeling down or depressed

Trouble sleeping

Nightmares

Could lose sexual desire

Liquid bowel movements (diarrhea)

If you are taking diabetic medication, beta blockers can mask or hide signs of a low blood sugar. For example, you might not feel shaky or feel your heart racing. However, you will have other signs of a low blood sugar such as hunger and sweating.

Medication Tips

♥ Before you start taking a beta blocker, make sure you tell your health care provider:

- If you have a history of breathing problems (such as asthma)
- If you have peripheral vascular disease (such as cold hands or feet, or pain in legs after walking)

♥ If you have high blood pressure, talk with your health care provider before using any products that might raise your blood pressure such as:

- Cough or cold drugs
- Diet pills or other stimulants
- Ibuprofen
- Natural products

✘ **Do not** suddenly stop taking beta blockers. It can make your heart failure worse.

♥ If you have low blood pressure, do not do anything that can lower your blood pressure even further.

- ✘ **Do not** drink alcohol.
- ✘ **Do not** do any strenuous exercise.
- ✘ **Do not** take really hot showers or baths, or use a hot tub.

♥ **Contact your health care provider right away** if you have any of these signs of a very bad reaction to the beta blocker:

- Wheezing
- Chest tightness
- Itching skin
- Seizures
- Swelling of face, lips, tongue, or throat
- If you feel like you are going to faint or collapse

To learn more about Beta Blockers, go to the HealthLinkBC web site (www.healthlinkbc.ca) or call 8-1-1.