

The Combination of Hydralazine and a Nitrate

Why take both hydralazine and a nitrate?

The combination of hydralazine and a nitrate are used to treat heart failure if you are not able to take either an Angiotensin Converting Enzyme Inhibitor (ACE) or Angiotensin II Receptor Blocker (ARB).

Also, people with black heritage benefit from the combination of hydralazine and nitrate in addition to standard heart failure medications.

What is hydralazine?

It is a medication that relaxes your arteries. This lowers your blood pressure, allowing blood and oxygen to flow more easily through your body.

Hydralazine is the most common name but it could also be called Apresoline.

What are nitrates?

These are a group of medications that relax your veins, easing the work on your heart.

Most common nitrates

- Ask your health care provider to check off the one you are taking.
- Isosorbide dinitrate (pill) (Isordil)
- Isosorbide-5-mononitrate (pill) (Imdur)
- Nitroglycerin (patch) (Minitran, Nitro-Dur, Transderm-Nitro, Trinipatch)
- Other _____

How will this combination help with your heart failure?

Together, these medications can:

- lower your blood pressure
- reduce the work of your heart
- improve your quality of life
- help you live longer
- help you stay out of the hospital

What if you miss taking a dose?

If it is almost time for your next dose, skip taking the dose you missed. 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 or Chinese medicines
- ✗ Anti-inflammatory medicines (such as Advil, Ibuprofen, Motrin, Naproxen, Aleve, Celebrex)
- ✗ Other medicines you buy at a pharmacy without a prescription

Health care provider contact information

To learn more about hydralazine and nitrate combined, go to the HealthLinkBC web site (www.healthlinkbc.ca) or call 8-1-1.

Common Side Effects

Hydralazine

- low blood pressure with feeling dizzy or lightheaded
- feeling weak
- constipation
- loose bowel movements or diarrhea
- headache
- flushing (warmth or redness in your face, neck, or chest)

Nitrate

- headache
- very low blood pressure
- dizzy or lightheaded
- flushing of the face and neck
- skin irritation with patch adhesive (consider the tablet instead)

Talk to your health care provider if you have any of these **common side effects**, especially if they worry you

Serious Side Effects

Hydralazine

- fainting
- fast or pounding heart
- numbness, tingling, or burning pain in your hands or feet
- rash
- swollen joints
- unexplained fever

Nitrate

- blurred vision
- chest pain
- fainting
- hives
- difficulty breathing or swallowing
- an upset stomach (nausea)
- throwing up (vomiting)

Contact your health care provider right away if you have any of these **serious side effects**

Medication Tips

- ♥ While taking the combination of hydralazine and nitrate, get your blood pressure checked regularly.
- ♥ When taking **nitrate by patch**:
 - Always remove the patch for at least 12 hours in a row within a 24 hour period. This prevents your body from getting used to the medication.
 - Always change where you put the patch on your body. This helps prevent skin problems.
- ♥ When taking **nitrate by pill**:
 - Always wait at least 12 hours between taking your last dose one day and your first dose the next day. This prevents your body from getting used to the medication.
- ♥ If you have low blood pressure, do not do anything that can lower your blood pressure even further.
 - ✗ **Do not** drink alcohol.
 - ✗ **Do not** exercise outside of your limits.
 - ✗ **Do not** take really hot showers or baths
 - ✗ **Do not** use a hot tub.
- ♥ These medications can cause dizziness. Do not drive a car or operate heavy duty machinery until you know how these medications affect you.
- ♥ While taking a nitrate, **do not** take erectile dysfunction medication (such as Viagra, Cialis, Levitra). It could result in a serious drop in your blood pressure and make you faint.
- ♥ **Do not** suddenly stop taking the combination of hydralazine and nitrate. It could make your heart failure worse.

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This handout is based on patient education materials originally co-created by Cardiac Services BC and the BC Heart Failure Network in 2012