Digoxin
(Lanoxin or Toloxin)

What is Digoxin?

Digoxin is a medication that:
- Slows your heart rate down
- Helps the heart beat stronger

This medication might be added to your treatment plan to improve some symptoms of your heart failure.

What is digoxin used for?

For people with **heart failure**, we use digoxin to help the heart beat stronger and pump better.

For people with **irregular heart rhythms** (such as atrial fibrillation), we use digoxin to help the heart beat slower.

How does digoxin help with heart failure?

When digoxin strengthens the pumping action of the heart, it should help you:
- Feel less tired
- Feel stronger
- Feel less short of breath
- Have less swelling of the feet and ankles

Digoxin helps control some of the electrical impulses in the heart. This slows the heart beat down and helps it to beat with a more regular rhythm. This adds to the effects of a stronger pumping action.

Digoxin helps keep your heart failure symptoms from getting worse.

What if you miss taking a dose?

If you remember within 12 hours of when were to take the missed dose, take it as soon as you remember.

If you are due to take your next dose in less than 12 hours, do not take the missed dose. Wait and take your next dose when you normally take it. Continue to take your digoxin as scheduled

If you have questions about taking your medications, or missed doses, contact your pharmacist or your health care provider.

Do not take any of the following without checking with your health care provider
- Herbal medicines
- Alcohol
- Cough or cold medicines
- Black licorice
- 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

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

Common Side Effects

Always tell your health care provider if you have any side effects.

- Feeling weak or tired
- Feeling sick to your stomach (nauseated)
- Throwing up (vomiting)
- Abdominal pain
- Do not feel like eating (lost your appetite)

- Skin rash, itchiness
- Feeling dizzy or lightheaded
- Headache
- Changes in your vision:
  – Red, green or yellow color disturbances
  – Things look slightly blurry
  – Sensitive to bright light
  – Seeing flashing lights

CONTACT your health care provider right away if any of these side effects do not go away or get worse.

Medication Tips

- Take your digoxin at the same time every day.

- Take your digoxin 1 hour before eating or 2 hours after eating.

- If you take an antacid, high fibre foods, or fibre supplements, always wait 2 hours before you can take your digoxin. These things can reduce the amount of digoxin absorbed by your body.

- **Never stop taking digoxin all of a sudden.** It can make your heart failure worse.

- You need your heart rate and blood pressure checked regularly while taking digoxin.
  - If you can check your heart rate and blood pressure at home, ask your health care provider when to call with any changes in your heart rate or blood pressure.

- Digoxin is broken down in your body by your kidneys. Let your health care provider if you are having any kidney problems or have kidney disease. You might need a blood test to check how well your kidneys are working.

- You might be sent for a blood test to check the level of digoxin in your blood, especially when you first start taking it. This tells your health care provider if the dose needs changing. This blood test is best done 8 or more hours after your last dose.

- **Contact your health care provider right away or go to the nearest Emergency Department** if you have any of these signs of too much digoxin in your body:

  - Your heart is beating very slow (less than 50 beats a minute) and you feel weak or dizzy.

  - You have nausea and vomiting that does not go away.

  - You have diarrhea, maybe even with blood in it or it looks black.

  - You feel very confused, are seeing things that are not there (hallucinating), or have unusual thoughts or behaviour.

  - You have trouble seeing, everything looks green or yellow, everything is blurry, or you see 'halos' around objects.