Understanding Your Medications

Information for patients taking medications to prevent and treat heart disease

Read this information to learn about:

- different medicines your doctor may prescribe for you
- how they affect your health
- possible side effects
Important

When taking any of these medicines:
Don’t drink alcohol at the same time as you take your medicines.

If you have any unusual side effects contact your pharmacist or tell your doctor. Your doctor will decide whether to decrease the dose of your medicine, change the medicine, or stop it completely.

If you have questions or need more information, please ask your pharmacist or doctor.
Statins

How does this medicine help?
Statins are cholesterol lowering medicines. Cholesterol is a type of fat made in your body and also found in foods. Statins are used to lower bad cholesterol (also called LDL) and other fats (such as triglycerides) in the body. They can also increase the amount of good cholesterol (also called HDL) in the body. This helps prevent heart disease, heart attacks and stroke.

The different types of statins are:
- Atorvastatin (Lipitor)
- Fluvastatin (Lescol)
- Lovastatin (Mevacor)
- Pravastatin (Pravachol)
- Rosuvastatin (Crestor)
- Simvastatin (Zocor)

How do I take this medicine?
It is best to take statins once a day in the evening.

Remember: Grapefruit and grapefruit juice increase the level of medicine in your blood and increase the chance of side effects. Avoid grapefruit and grapefruit juice when taking statins, except if you are taking rosuvastatin (Crestor), pravastatin (Pravachol) and fluvastatin (Lescol).

What are the possible side effects?
- nausea
- heartburn
- constipation or diarrhea
- feeling dizzy
- stomach pain or gas
- headaches

Some side effects may go away as your body gets used to the medicine.
Call your doctor right away if you have:

- unexplained muscle pains or weakness
- very bad stomach pain
- dark coloured pee
- jaundice (yellowing of your skin)
- very bad vomiting
- a skin rash
- numbness and tingling, usually in your arms or legs
- feel unusually tired

Angiotensin Converting Enzyme (ACE) Inhibitors

How does this medicine help?
ACE inhibitors decrease the amount of salt and water in your body, which helps to decrease your blood pressure. ACE inhibitors also relax the blood vessels that take blood to and from your heart. This improves how well your heart works. In a weakened heart, ACE inhibitors strengthen your heart muscle and prevent further damage.

The different types of ACE inhibitors are:

- Ramipril (Altace)
- Perindopril (Coversyl)
- Enalapril (Vasotec)
- Quinapril (Accupril)
- Fosinopril (Monopril)
- Cilazapril (Inhibace)
- Benazepril (Lotensin)
- Captopril (Capoten)
- Trandolapril (Mavik)
- Lisinopril (Zestril or Prinivil)
How do I take this medicine?
You usually take ACE inhibitors once or twice a day. Some ACE inhibitors, such as captopril, may be taken more often. Always follow your doctor’s instructions for taking this medicine.

**Remember:** Tell your doctor if you are taking potassium supplements. You may need to have the potassium level in your blood checked regularly.

What are the possible side effects?

- low blood pressure
- dry cough
- dizziness – to avoid feeling dizzy, stand up slowly if you have been sitting or lying down
- worsening kidney function
- rash
- increased potassium
- taste changes

Some side effects may go away as your body gets used to the medicine.

**Call your doctor right away if you have:**

- an irritating cough that seems to last a few weeks and is not related to a cold
- very bad dizziness or dizziness that lasts a few days
- an allergic rash (hives or swelling of your face or tongue)
- trouble breathing
Beta blockers

How does this medicine help?
Beta blockers decrease your heart rate and reduce how hard your heart has to work. They can reduce your chances of having another heart attack. Beta blockers can also help manage high blood pressure, certain types of irregular heartbeats, chest pain, and heart failure.

The different types of beta blockers are:
- Metoprolol (Lopressor)
- Acebutolol (Sectral)
- Bisoprolol (Monocor)
- Nadolol (generics only)
- Atenolol (Tenormin)
- Propranolol (Inderal)
- Carvedilol (Coreg)

How do I take this medicine?
You usually take beta blockers once or twice a day.

Remember: When you first start taking beta blockers, you may feel tired. This usually gets better after a few weeks. If you feel dizzy, stand up slowly if you have been sitting or lying down. Don’t drive or use heavy machines until you feel better.

Let your doctor know if you have diabetes or asthma. Patients with diabetes or asthma have to be careful when taking this medication.
What are the possible side effects?

- dizziness or drowsiness
- changes in blood sugar levels
- feeling tired or weak
- upset stomach
- trouble sleeping
- headache
- constipation or diarrhea
- decreased sex drive or sexual dysfunction (problems while having sex)

Some side effects may go away as your body gets used to the medicine.

⚠️ Call your doctor right away if you have:

- fainted
- chest pain
- shortness of breath
- very slow heartbeat (less than 50 beats per minute)
- sudden weight gain
- swelling of your feet and legs
- difficulty breathing
Acetylsalicylic acid (Aspirin)

How does this medicine help?
Acetylsalicylic acid is also called Aspirin or ASA. It is an antiplatelet medicine. This means it prevents platelets (a type of blood cell) from sticking together and forming blood clots.

It also helps prevent heart attacks and strokes. If you have a stent (a little tube placed in an artery to allow blood to flow through), this medicine prevents clots from forming in it. Higher doses of this medicine are only sometimes used to relieve pain and fever.

How do I take this medicine?
You usually take aspirin once a day with food or milk.

**Remember:** If you are taking aspirin, check with your doctor or pharmacist before taking:

- antacids (such as Tums or Maalox)
- anti-inflammatory medicines (such as Advil, Motrin or Aleve)
- other products that contain acetylsalicylic acid or that can cause blood thinning, such as herbal supplements and vitamin E

Acetaminophen (such as Tylenol) is safe to take with aspirin.

What are the possible side effects?

- stomach pain — to prevent stomach pain, try taking aspirin with milk or food. You can also buy the coated tablets
- bleeding
- nausea and vomiting

Some side effects may go away as your body gets used to the medicine.
Call your doctor right away if you have:

- fainted or feel dizzy
- a skin rash, itching or hives
- unusual bruising or bleeding
- very bad stomach pain
- ringing in your ears
- black or tar coloured stools

**Clopidogrel**

**How does this medicine help?**

Clopidogrel is also called Plavix. It is an antiplatelet medicine. This means it prevents platelets (a type of blood cell) from sticking together and forming blood clots. It may be prescribed if you had a heart attack or stroke. It is combined with aspirin to prevent clots from forming on stents placed in coronary (heart) arteries.

**How do I take this medicine?**

You usually take clopidogrel once a day with food.

**Remember:** Don’t take clopidogrel and aspirin with anything that can cause blood thinning, such as anti-inflammatory medicines (Advil, Motrin or Aleve), herbal supplements (such as ginseng) and vitamin E. Acetaminophen (such as Tylenol) is safe to take with clopidogrel and aspirin.
What are the possible side effects?

- stomach pain – To prevent stomach pain, try taking clopidogrel with milk or food
- bleeding

Some side effects may go away as your body gets used to the medicine.

⚠️ **Call your doctor right away if you have:**

- a skin rash or hives
- unusual bruising or bleeding
- very bad diarrhea that doesn’t stop after a few days
- jaundice (yellowing of your skin)

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**Ticagrelor**

**How does this medicine help?**

Ticagrelor is also called Brilinta. It is an antiplatelet medicine. This means it prevents platelets (a type of blood cell) from sticking together and forming blood clots. It is combined with aspirin to prevent clots from forming on stents placed in coronary (heart) arteries. It may be prescribed if you have had a heart attack.

**How do I take this medicine?**

You usually take ticagrelor twice a day with or without food.

⚠️ **Remember:** Don’t eat grapefruit or drink grapefruit juice while taking ticagrelor. Grapefruit can increase the levels of the medicine in your blood and increase the chance of side effects.
Don’t take ticagrelor and aspirin with anything that can cause blood thinning, such as anti-inflammatory medicines (Advil, Motrin or Aleve), herbal supplements (such as ginseng) and vitamin E. Acetaminophen (such as Tylenol) is safe to take with ticagrelor and aspirin.

What are the possible side effects?

• bleeding
• shortness of breath – If this happens speak with your doctor
• red, swollen, painful, hot joints

Some side effects may go away as your body gets used to the medicine.

⚠️ Call your doctor right away if you have:

• a skin rash or hives
• unusual bruising or bleeding
• very bad diarrhea that doesn’t go away after a few days
• jaundice (yellowing of your skin)
Prasugrel

How does this medicine help?
Prasugrel is also called Effient. It is an antiplatelet medication. This means it prevents platelets (a type of blood cell) from sticking together and forming blood clots. It is combined with aspirin to prevent clots from forming on stents placed in coronary (heart) arteries.

How do I take this medicine?
You usually take prasugrel once a day with or without food.

Remember: Do not take prasugrel and aspirin with anything that can cause blood thinning, such as anti-inflammatory medicines (Advil, Motrin or Aleve), herbal supplements (such as ginseng) and vitamin E. Acetaminophen (such as Tylenol) is safe to take with ticagrelor and aspirin.

Let your doctor know if you have had a stroke or mini-stroke (transient ischemic attack) because this is not the safest medicine for you.

What are the possible side effects?

• bruising more easily
• bleeding

Some side effects may go away as your body gets used to the medicine.

Call your doctor right away if you have:

• a skin rash or hives
• unusual bruising or bleeding
• very bad diarrhea that doesn’t go away after a few days
• jaundice (yellowing of your skin)