

Medicines Management



Do I really need all these tablets?

- Why am I taking these tablets?
- What do they do?
- Potential side effects?
- Can I take over the counter medication?
- What if I forget to take a tablet?



Why take medicines?

- Reduce your risk of having another cardiac event
- Control symptoms and improve quality of life
- Evidence based medicines: safe and effective
- Patient's choice



Antiplatelets

Aspirin

- Reduces risk of having a blood clot in the heart (heart attack) or brain (stroke).

Clopidogrel, Ticagrelor, Prasugrel

- Makes blood less sticky.
- Generally taken with aspirin.
- Reduces risk of heart attacks and stroke.

Ticagrelor:

- Works faster, but shorter time.
- So taken twice a day.
- Avoid grapefruit juice.

Side effects:

- Increased risk of bleeding
- Irritation to lining of stomach
- Rash or Itch
- Occasionally can bring on an asthma attack in more severe asthmatics
- Avoid Ginko, St. Johns Wort and Non-steroidals as increases levels of the drug

Seek advice do not just stop!



Beta Blockers - Bisoprolol, Atenolol, Carvedilol, Nebivolol, Metoprolol

- Blocks the action of adrenaline - slows the heart down. Helps prevent the heart from beating too fast or too forcefully when exercising or feeling stressed.
- Prevents angina.
- Lowers blood pressure.
- Reduce risk of further heart attack.
- Some types of beta-blockers help control heart rhythms.

Side effects:

- Tiredness, fatigue
- Cold hands and feet
- Aggravate asthma
- Impotence
- Nightmares
- Rashes
- Potential to raise blood sugar

Do not just stop - it may lead to worsening angina!



Angiotensin Converting Enzyme Inhibitors (ACEs) - Ramipril, Lisinopril, Perindopril

- Work in the kidneys. They reduce your blood pressure and improve the pumping of the heart by:
- Reducing the salt and water in your blood (that's why your asked not to have too much salt in your diet).
- Reduces the constriction of vessels - makes them relax.
- GP/nurse should review the dose:
 - Aim is to titrate up to the maximum tolerating dose for YOU.
 - Monitor kidney function and potassium level.
 - Blood tests are required after the dose has been changed then once a year after that.

Side effects:

- Can cause low blood pressure, affect kidney and liver function, cause persistent dry cough,
- Angioedema - rapid swelling, rash

Angiotensin-II Antagonists (ARBs) - Losartan, Candesartan, Irbesartan, Valsartan

- Work similarly to the ACE inhibitors, but do not cause a dry cough



Statins - Atorvastatin, Simvastatin, Pravastatin, Rosuvastatin

- Statins block the cholesterol making in the liver.
- Most effective if taken at night - as that is when your cholesterol is mainly made.
- Reduces the risk of having a heart attack.
- Cardio protective therapy - reduces inflammation of the coronary artery walls.
- Regular liver function and cholesterol checks - normally annually.

Side effects:

- Rare: Muscle weakness (NOT joint ache). Tremor, rash, headache and diarrhoea.
- Potential to raise blood sugar.
- Interactions: Grapefruit juice - causes accumulation of the drug in the body.

Seek advice do not just stop! If you read information on statins in the media that concerns you speak to a health professional.



Nitrates - GTN spray / tablets, Isosorbide Mononitrate

- Relaxes the walls of the smooth muscles in the arteries and veins including the coronary arteries.
- This means the hearts arteries become wider, allowing blood containing oxygen to more easily reach the heart.
- Prevents angina

GTN spray or GTN tablet under the tongue (sublingually) helps to relieve angina.

A GTN spray can be tried 3 times at five minute intervals, if no response then call 999

Remember to check the expiry dates

Side effects:

- Headache, flushing, dizziness or even fainting.
- These effects generally reduce.



Diuretics - Furosemide, Spironolactone, Eplerenone, Bendroflumethiazide

- Used to reduce excess fluid after heart damage (heart failure) or to reduce blood pressure
- Removes excess water from body - less volume for heart to pump around
- Might be taking more than one
- Usually take in the morning

Side effects: increased frequency of passing urine, may affect potassium levels, may alter blood sugar, may worsen gout.



Calcium Channel Blockers - Amlodipine, Diltiazem, Verapamil

- Widen blood vessels - increase oxygen to heart
- Some slow heart rate
- Use to treat different conditions including: high blood pressure, angina, arrhythmias

Side effects: headache, flushing, tiredness, gastrointestinal upset, ankle swelling



Oral Anticoagulants

Commonly use in patients with atrial fibrillation (AF), history of pulmonary embolism or deep vein thrombosis by thinning the blood.

- Prevent from having clots that could lead to stroke or other systemic embolism
- Must be taken at the same time each day
- Carry the anticoagulation alert card with you

Warfarin

- Required after prosthetic heart valves.
- Do not suddenly take large quantity of foods that are high in vitamin K that can counteract the medication. This includes liver and green, leafy vegetables, such as broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, kale and spinach.
- Avoid cranberry juice.
- Regular INR blood tests needed.

Novel oral anticoagulants (NOACs) –Apixiban, Rivoroxiban

- Can be used for people with AF that is not associated with having heart valve problems.
- No blood test required.

Side effects:

- Bruising, bleeding.
- Anaemia.
- If you suffer a head injury by falling and hitting your head, or you experience a blow to the head, seek medical help .



What if I accidentally miss a tablet?

- If you miss your medication do not panic!
- Do not double up on any of your medications.
- Seek advice from either your GP, NHS 111, your specialist nurse, heart function nurse, cardiac rehab nurse.



Over the counter medication

- Always discuss with the pharmacist, your GP or nurse as there can be interactions between medications.
- For example some cold and flu tablets are not recommended for people with high blood pressure.
- Non-steroidal medications are not routinely recommended for pain relief for patients with heart conditions.



Flu and pneumonia jab

- An annual flu jab is recommended for people with heart conditions.
- One off pneumonia jab is recommended for people with heart conditions.

