

Medications

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The medicines that you have been given are an important part of the treatment plan. This chapter provides guidelines and information about many heart medications.

It is important for you to follow the medication regimen your doctor has prescribed. Let your doctor or the Cardiac Rehab staff know if you have any concerns about taking your medications.

SECTION 1

♥ **General Guidelines For Taking Medication**

The following guidelines are meant to help prevent mistakes in taking medication. Please follow them carefully.

- ✓ Never take medication in the dark.
- ✓ Always read the labels on your medication bottles.
- ✓ Take exactly as ordered by your doctor. Do not skip doses or take extra. Bad effects can happen from taking too much or too little of a medication.
- ✓ Do not give your medication to someone else and do not take any medication not prescribed for you.
- ✓ Make sure to tell all doctors or

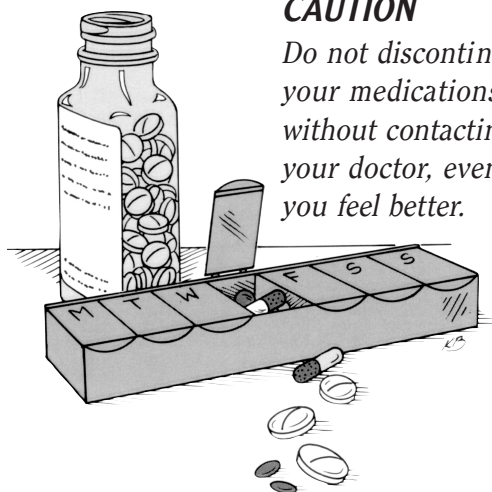
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dentists what medications you are taking.

- ✓ Some medications should be taken with food and some should be taken on an empty stomach. Know how your medication needs to be taken.
- ✓ If you are taking a long-acting or sustained release form of a medication, you must swallow it whole. Do not break, chew, or crush before swallowing.
- ✓ For liquid medications use a measuring spoon or specially marked device. Do not use your silverware.
- ✓ Check with your doctor or pharmacist before taking any over-the-counter or non-prescription medications.
- ✓ Know what side effects or reactions to report to your doctor.
- ✓ Always carry a list of medications with you. Include the name, strength, and dose of both prescription and non-prescription medications, including natural or herbal drugs. Also include if you

CAUTION

Do not discontinue your medications without contacting your doctor, even if you feel better.



have any allergies and the reaction. This can be very important in an emergency. The Cardiac Rehab staff can provide you with a medication wallet card and help you fill it out.

- ✓ Refill your medication before you are completely out. Plan ahead for weekends and holidays.
- ✓ Have all your prescriptions filled at the same pharmacy. This will allow your pharmacist to better screen for drug interactions.
- ✓ If you are worried you might forget to take your regular medicine, a medicine chest (pillbox) can help you remember when to take your medication.

What you should know about each of your medications

1. Name & strength of each medication.
2. Why are you taking each medication?
3. How much and how often do you need to take it?
4. How long will you need to take it?
5. Possible side effects or reactions. What do you do if side effects occur?
6. Does the medication interact or interfere with any of your other medicines, over-the-counter products or alcohol?
7. Are there any special instructions?
8. How should you store your medication?

Grapefruit Juice/Drug Interactions

Grapefruit juice can interact with some prescription medications. If you are taking any of the following medications, it is recommended that you decrease or eliminate grapefruit in your diet.

Medications that can Interact with grapefruit juice

| Medication name | Possible effects |
|--|--|
| Diazepam (Valium) | Increased sedation |
| Triazolam (Halcion) | |
| Lovastatin (Mevacor) | Headaches, muscle pain |
| Atorvastatin (Lipitor) | gastrointestinal complaints |
| Simvastatin (Zocor) | |
| Amlodipine (Norvasc) | Increased adverse effects |
| Felodipine (Plendil) | |
| Nicardipine (Cardene) | |
| Nifedipine (Procardia, Adalat) | |
| Nimopidine (Nimotop) | |
| Nisoldipine (Sular) | |
| Verapamil (Isoptin, Calan, Verelan, Covera HS) | |
| Cyclosporine (Sandimmune, Neoral) | Increased gastrointestinal complaints (Nausea, stomach pain) |
| Tacrolimus (Prograf) | |
| Prednisone | |
| Carbamazepine (Tegretol) | |
| Estinyl Estradiol (Estiny) | |
| Itraconazole (Sporonox) | |
| Quinidine (Cardioquin, Quinaglute, Quinidex) | |
| Caffeine | |
| Viagra (Sildenafil) | |
| Cialis (Tadalafil) | |
| Cilostazol (Pletal) | |
| Amiodarone (Cordarone) | |
| Colchicine | |
| Bupropion (Zyban, Wellbutrin) | |
| Losartan (Cozaar) | |
| Propafenone (Rythmol) | |

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9. What do you do if a dose is missed?
10. Does the medication require any monitoring (i.e. blood tests)?

Storage of Medications

- ✓ **KEEP OUT OF REACH OF CHILDREN**
- ✓ Store in a cool, dry place.
- ✓ Keep away from heat or sunlight.
- ✓ Keep in the original container, tightly capped. Do not mix different medications in one bottle.
- ✓ Do not remove labels, these will contain directions and any special information.
- ✓ Do not store in the refrigerator unless directed by your pharmacist or doctor.
- ✓ Do not keep in the bathroom, near a sink, or in any damp place. Heat or moisture may cause the medication to break down.
- ✓ Discard any medication that you have been instructed not to take any more or any medication that is expired.

What to do if you miss a dose?

If you've missed a dose, take it as soon as possible. If several hours have passed or if it is nearing the time for the next dose, **DO NOT DOUBLE THE DOSE IN ORDER TO "CATCH UP,"** just skip the missed dose and continue your usual schedule. If you miss more than one dose or you have questions call your doctor.

SECTION 2

♥ Angiotensin Converting Enzyme (ACE) Inhibitors

Angiotensin is a substance in the body that causes blood vessels to narrow. ACE inhibitors reduce the production of angiotensin by blocking the enzyme, angiotensin converting enzyme. This allows the blood vessels to relax, for a reduction in blood pressure and increase in blood and oxygen supply to the heart.

Uses for ACE Inhibitors include treatment of high blood pressure (hypertension), congestive heart failure, and to protect the kidneys of diabetic patients.

Examples of ACE Inhibitors

- Benazepril (Lotensin)
- Captopril (Capoten)
- Enalapril (Vasotec)
- Fosinopril (Monopril)
- Lisinopril (Prinivil, Zestril)
- Moexipril (Univasc)
- Perindopril (Aceon)
- Quinapril (Accupril)
- Ramipril (Altace)
- Trandolapril (Mavik)

Things to Remember

- ✓ **DO NOT** take other medications unless you discuss them with your doctor or pharmacist. This especially includes over-the-counter medications for appetite control, asthma, colds, cough, hay fever, or sinus problems since they may increase your blood pressure.

- ✓ DO NOT take salt substitutes or medications containing potassium while taking ACE inhibitors, unless prescribed by your doctor.
- ✓ ACE inhibitors may cause your body to retain potassium. Signs of too much potassium are: confusion, irregular heart/beat, nervousness, weakness, heaviness of the legs, and numbness or tingling in the hands, feet or lips. Check with your doctor if any of these signs occur.
- ✓ You may become dizzy or lightheaded while taking ACE inhibitors. Make sure you know how you react to this medication before driving an automobile or operating machinery. Alcohol may make this effect stronger.
- ✓ Dizziness, lightheadedness, or fainting may occur if you exercise or if the weather is hot. Heavy sweating may cause you to lose too much water and lower your blood pressure. Use extra care during exercise in hot weather.
- ✓ If you are taking captopril or moexipril, take on an empty stomach one hour before meals.

Possible Side Effects

- ▼ Dry cough
- ▼ Loss of taste
- ▼ Nausea or vomiting
- ▼ Headache
- ▼ Unusual tiredness
- ▼ Diarrhea

- ▼ Dizziness or lightheadedness
- ▼ Skin rash

CAUTIONS

Tell your doctor if you are taking captopril or fosinopril. These medications may interfere with some medical tests.

Notify your doctor immediately if any of the following occur: fever and chills, hoarseness, trouble in breathing or swallowing, or swelling of the face, mouth, hands or feet.

SECTION 3

♥ **Angiotensin II Receptor Blockers (ARBs)**

Angiotensin Receptor Blockers (ARBs) are similar to ACE Inhibitors. They block the action of angiotensin by blocking the binding of angiotensin to the receptor. This results in a relaxation of blood vessels and a reduction in blood pressure.

ARBs are used to treat high blood pressure and may have benefit in patients with congestive heart failure and to protect the kidneys of diabetic patients.

Examples of Angiotensin Receptor Blockers

- Candesartan (Atacand)
- Eprosartan (Teveten)
- Irbesartan (Avapro)
- Losartan (Cozaar)
- Olmesartan (Benicar)

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- Telmisartan (Micardis)
- Valsartan (Diovan)

Combination products with a diuretic such as hydrochlorothiazide are also available.

- Irbesartan + Hydrochlorothiazide (Avalide)
- Losartan + Hydrochlorothiazide (Hyzaar)
- Valsartan + Hydrochlorothiazide (Diovan HCT)

Things to Remember

- ✓ Don't use potassium supplements or salt substitutes containing potassium without checking with your physician first.
- ✓ You may take these medicines with or without food.
- ✓ This medication may make you dizzy or drowsy. Avoid driving, using machines, or doing anything else that could be dangerous if you are not alert.

Possible Side Effects

- ▼ Back pain
- ▼ Cough, stuffy or runny nose, sore throat
- ▼ Headache
- ▼ Dizziness
- ▼ Notify your physician if you have any of these side effects:
- ▼ Allergic reaction: itching, hives, swelling in face or hands, swelling or tingling in mouth or throat, tightness in chest, trouble swallowing

- ▼ Change in how much or how often you urinate
- ▼ Chest pain
- ▼ Fast or slow heartbeat
- ▼ Lightheadedness or fainting
- ▼ Swelling in the hands, ankles or feet

SECTION 4

♥ **Antiarrhythmics**

When your heart has an irregular rhythm your body may not receive all the blood and nutrients it needs. Antiarrhythmics help correct irregular rhythms and increase your heart's efficiency.

Examples of Antiarrhythmics

- Amiodarone (Cordarone)
- Disopyramide (Norpace, Norpace CR)
- Dofetilide (Tikosyn)
- Flecainide (Tambocor)
- Mexiletine (Mexitil)
- Moricizine (Ethmozine)
- Procainamide (Pronestyl, Procan)
- Propafenone (Rhythmol)
- Quinidine (Quinidex, Quinaglute)
- Tocainide (Tonocard)

Things to Remember

- ✓ Do not miss taking a dose and do not take more than what is ordered.
- ✓ Take at evenly spaced times at the same time every day.
- ✓ Do not stop taking unless ordered by your doctor.

- ✓ Do not confuse quinidine with quinine. These are different medications with different uses. Quinine is a medication used to treat nighttime leg cramps.
- ✓ It is best to take these medications with meals unless otherwise directed so by your doctor or pharmacist.
- ✓ Sensitivity to sunlight may occur while you are taking Amiodarone. Use sunscreen and protective clothing until tolerance is determined.

Possible Side Effects

- ▼ All Antiarrhythmics: Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, constipation, worsening of heart rhythm, dizziness, fainting, fatigue, confusion, loss of appetite, rash.
- ▼ Amiodarone: Halos around lights, sensitivity to lights, blurred vision, dry eyes, blue-gray skin color, numbness and tingling in hands and feet, hair loss, shortness of breath, coughing.
- ▼ Disopyramide: Difficult urination, chest pain, dry mouth or throat, muscle weakness, rapid weight gain, decreased sexual ability.
- ▼ Flecainide: Headache, tremor, abdominal pain, ringing in ears, edema, change in taste, dry mouth, blurred vision, difficulty focusing, depression, incoordination.
- ▼ Mexiletine: Stomach pain, tremor, depression, palpitations (pounding

in chest), joint pain, blurred vision, incoordination, ringing in ears.

- ▼ Moricizine: Palpitations, dizziness, nausea, trouble breathing, headache.
- ▼ Propafenone: Stomach pain, dry mouth, anxiety, drowsiness, incoordination, palpitations (pounding in chest), blurred vision, edema, weakness.
- ▼ Procainamide: Fever, chills, joint pain, skin rash, sore mouth, gums, or throat, unusual tiredness or weakness, trouble breathing.
- ▼ Quinidine: Bitter taste, flushing, stomach pain or cramping, blurred vision, severe headache, ringing in ears, trouble breathing, fainting.
- ▼ Tocainide: Tingling, tremor, blurred vision, sweating, drowsiness, confusion, headache.

SECTION 5

♥ Anticoagulants

Anticoagulants interfere with the clotting ability of your blood. They are often called blood thinners, but they don't really thin the blood. They lengthen the time it takes your blood to clot. They are used to prevent clot formation in arteries, veins, heart chambers, and on artificial heart valves. They will not dissolve blood clots that have already formed, but they do prevent clots from enlarging.

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Dosing of anticoagulants varies widely between individuals. Your dose is determined by a blood test called the prothrombin time (protime or PT), which measures how fast your blood clots. The PT is then converted to a standardized ratio and reported at the International Normalized Ratio (INR). Your INR will be determined during regular visits to your doctor.

Dosage changes may occur based on the results of this blood test. Tell your doctor if you have missed any doses, which could affect the test results.

The most widely used anticoagulant is: Warfarin (Coumadin)

Things to remember

- ✓ Take your anticoagulant exactly as prescribed, and at the same time every day. It may be helpful to keep a daily record of the time you take it.
- ✓ Inform all of your doctors, dentists, pharmacists, and nurses that you are taking an anticoagulant. If you are having dental work or other procedures done, special precautions may be necessary to prevent bleeding.
- ✓ Carry identification stating which anticoagulant you are taking and your dosage.
- ✓ If your doctor prescribes aspirin along with your anticoagulant, it is important to take the same dose of aspirin every day. Do not take additional aspirin for pain or fever, use acetaminophen instead.

Aspirin increases the blood thinning action of anticoagulants, so it is very important to take the same dose every day.

- ✓ Limit your alcohol intake. Drinking too much alcohol may change the way your anticoagulant works. If you have questions about drinking alcohol, please ask your physician.

CAUTION

1. Anticoagulants can interact with many other medications, resulting in an increase or decrease in effectiveness. Do not start or stop taking any other medication without consulting your doctor or pharmacist. This includes common over the counter medications such as aspirin, ibuprofen (Advil), and naproxen (Aleve).
2. The effect of your anticoagulant depends on the amount of vitamin K in your body. Vitamin K is found in meats, dairy products, and green leafy vegetables (like broccoli, cabbage, collard greens, kale, lettuce, and spinach) as well as in some multiple vitamins and nutritional supplements. It is best to have about the same amount of vitamin K in your diet every day. Do not make radical changes in your diet. Also check with your doctor if you are unable to eat for several days or if you have continuing stomach upset, diarrhea, or fever.

3. If you miss a dose and realize it that same day, take it as soon as possible. If you don't remember until the next day, do not take the missed dose and do not double the next one. Doubling doses could cause bleeding.
4. Do not begin taking warfarin during pregnancy, and do not become pregnant while taking it. It may cause birth defects.

Possible Side Effects

Notify your doctor immediately if any of the following occur:

- ▼ Red or black tarry stools
- ▼ Red or dark brown urine
- ▼ Back pain, abdominal pain or swelling
- ▼ Dizziness
- ▼ Unexplained nosebleeds
- ▼ Severe or constant headaches
- ▼ Vomiting of blood or material that looks like coffee grounds
- ▼ Excessive bleeding from gums when brushing teeth, or excessive bleeding or oozing from cuts.
- ▼ Unexplained bruising or purplish areas on the skin.
- ▼ Unusually heavy or unexpected menstrual bleeding.
- ▼ Skin rash or itching

The Cardiac Rehab staff can show you a video and give you additional information on what you need to know while you are taking Warfarin (Coumadin).

SECTION 6

♥ **Antiplatelets**

Platelets are components of the blood that clump together to help form blood clots. Antiplatelet medications interfere by preventing platelets from sticking together. They help prevent the formation of blood clots within the heart or blood vessels.

Antiplatelets are often used after heart surgery.

Examples of Antiplatelets

- Dipyridamole (Persantine)
- Aspirin (Ecotrin, Ascriptin, Bufferin, Bayer, etc.)
- Dipyridamole + Aspirin (Aggrenox)
- Ticlopidine (Ticlid)
- Clopidogrel (Plavix)

Things to remember

- ✓ Check with your doctor to see if you can take aspirin for other reasons (headache, fever). This applies whether you are prescribed aspirin, dipyridamole or ticlopidine.
- ✓ Store aspirin in a tightly closed bottle in a cool, dry place. If aspirin has a strong vinegar smell, it has broken down and should be discarded.
- ✓ If aspirin upsets your stomach, take it with food or an antacid. Buffered or enteric coated aspirin can also be used.

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- ✓ Dipyridamole is most effective taken on an empty stomach with a full glass of water. If this method upsets your stomach, this drug may be taken with food.
- ✓ If you are on ticlopidine, this medication should be taken with a meal or snack.
- ✓ Clopidogrel can be taken without regard to meals.

CAUTION

Ticlopidine may lead to increased bleeding. Report an unusual bleeding or dark-colored stools to your doctor. Make sure your doctors and dentists are aware you are on this medication. Lab tests are required during treatment with ticlopidine. These may include blood counts and liver function tests.

Possible Side Effects

Dipyridamole, Ticlopidine and Clopidogrel

- ▼ Dizziness, light-headedness, or fainting
- ▼ Stomach cramping, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea
- ▼ Weakness
- ▼ Headache
- ▼ Flushing, skin rash, itching

Aspirin

- ▼ Abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting
- ▼ Bloody or black tarry stools
- ▼ Vomiting of blood or material resembling coffee grounds
- ▼ Skin rash, hives, itching
- ▼ Ringing in the ears

SECTION 7

♥ Beta Blockers

Beta blockers work by affecting the response of various parts of the body to nerve impulses. The heart's response is to reduce heart rate and the strength of muscle contraction. By lowering the heart's need for blood and oxygen, the heart can work more efficiently.

Beta blockers are used to treat high blood pressure (hypertension), relieve chest pain (angina), correct irregular heart rhythms (arrhythmias), and prevent additional heart attacks in patients who have had a heart attack.

Examples of Beta blockers

- Acebutolol (Sectral)
- Atenolol (Tenormin)
- Betaxolol (Kerlone)
- Bisoprolol (Zebeta)
- Carteolol (Cartrol)
- Carvedilol (Coreg)
- Labetalol (Trandate, Normodyne)
- Metoprolol (Lopressor, Toprol XL)
- Nadolol (Corgard)
- Penbutolol (Levatol)
- Pindolol (Visken)
- Propranolol (Inderal, Inderal LA)
- Sotalol (Betapace)
- Timolol (Blocadren)

Things to Remember

- ✗ DO NOT stop taking this medication without first checking with your doctor. Some conditions

(such as chest pain) may become worse when the medication is stopped suddenly.

- ✓ When getting up from a lying or sitting position, you may become dizzy or faint. If this occurs, getting up slowly may help. Alcohol may make this effect worse.
- ✓ You may become more sensitive to cold temperatures, especially if you have blood circulating problems. Dress warmly during cold weather and be careful during prolonged exposure to cold.
- ✓ Ask your doctor about checking your pulse or heart rate. If it is much slower than your usual rate (or less than 50 beats per minute), check with your doctor.
- ✓ If you are taking the extended-release capsule or tablet form of metoprolol or propranolol, swallow the capsule or tablet whole. DO NOT crush, break, or chew before swallowing.
- ✓ If you are taking sotalol, take on an empty stomach one hour before meals.
- ✓ Labetalol, metoprolol, and propranolol are most effective taken with a meal or a snack.
- ✓ Acebutolol, atenolol, betaxolol, bisoprolol, nadolol, and pindolol may be taken without regard to food.

CAUTION

1. You may become dizzy, drowsy, or lightheaded while taking this medication. This side effect often goes away after the first few weeks of therapy. Make sure you know how you react to this medication before driving an automobile or operating machinery.
2. This medication may reduce or prevent chest pain resulting from exercise or physical exertion. This may tempt you to “over do” it. Make sure you discuss with your doctor a safe level of exercise for you.
3. If you are a diabetic, beta blockers may cause your blood sugar levels to fall. This medication may also cover up signs of low blood sugar, and changes in the heart rate.
4. DO NOT take other medications unless you discuss them with your doctor or pharmacist. This especially includes over-the-counter medications for appetite control, asthma, colds, cough, hay fever, or sinus problems since they may increase your blood pressure.

Possible Side Effects

- ▼ Difficulty breathing
- ▼ Chest pain
- ▼ Cold hands or feet
- ▼ Unusually slow heart rate
- ▼ Depression
- ▼ Nightmares
- ▼ Skin rash

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- ▼ Swelling of ankles, feet, or lower legs
- ▼ Decreased sexual arousal or impotence
- ▼ Dizziness or lightheadedness
- ▼ Drowsiness
- ▼ Nausea or vomiting

Alpha/Beta Blocker

Carvedilol (Coreg) is a drug that has both the properties of a beta-blocker and an alpha-blocker. Both actions decrease blood pressure. Carvedilol can be used to treat high blood pressure or in combination with other medications to treat congestive heart failure. Carvedilol must be taken with food to reduce the risk of too low blood pressure.

SECTION 8

♥ Calcium Channel Blockers

Calcium Channel Blockers affect the movement of calcium into the cells of the heart and blood vessels. As a result, they relax blood vessels and increase the amount of blood and oxygen delivered to the heart, while reducing the heart's work load.

Calcium Channel Blockers are used to relieve and control chest pain (angina), treat high blood pressure (hypertension), and correct irregular heart rhythms (arrhythmias).

Examples of Calcium

Channel Blockers

- Amlodipine (Norvasc)
- Bepridil (Vascor)
- Diltiazem (Cardizem, Cardizem SR, Cardizem CD, Dilacor XR, Tiazac)
- Felodipine (Plendil)
- Isradipine (Dynacirc)
- Nicardipine (Cardene, Cardene SR)
- Nifedipine (Adalat, Adalat CC, Procardia, Procardia XL)
- Nimodipine (Nimotop)
- Nisoldipine (Sular)
- Verapamil (Calan, Calan SR, Isoptin, Isoptin SR, Verelan)

Things to Remember

- ✗ **DO NOT** stop taking this medication without first checking with your doctor. Some conditions (such as chest pain or irregular heart rhythms) may become worse when the medication is stopped suddenly.
- ✗ **DO NOT** take other medications unless you discuss them with your doctor or pharmacist. This especially includes over-the-counter medications for appetite control, asthma, colds, cough, hay fever, or sinus problems since they may increase your blood pressure.
- ✓ If you are taking diltiazem or verapamil, ask your doctor about checking your pulse or heart rate. If it's much slower than your usual rate (or less than 50 beats

per minute), check with your doctor.

- ✓ You may get a headache during the first week or two of taking this medication. This effect is more common if you are taking nifedipine. This should become less noticeable after a while. If it continues, see your doctor.
- ✓ When getting up from a lying or sitting position, you may become dizzy or faint. If this occurs, getting up slowly may help. Alcohol may also make this effect worse.
- ✓ If you are taking the extended-release capsule or tablet form of diltiazem, nicardipine, nifedipine, nisoldipine, or verapamil, swallow the capsule or tablet whole. DO NOT crush, break or chew before swallowing.
- ✓ Avoid taking nisoldipine with grapefruit products.

CAUTION

Chest pain resulting from exercise or physical exertion is reduced or prevented with this medication. This may tempt you to “over do” it. Make sure you discuss a safe level of exercise with your doctor.

Possible Side Effects

- ▼ Difficulty breathing
- ▼ Irregular or unusually fast or slow heart rate
- ▼ Chest pain
- ▼ Swelling of ankles, feet, or lower legs

- ▼ Dizziness or lightheadedness
- ▼ Flushing or feeling of warmth
- ▼ Nausea
- ▼ Skin rash

SECTION 9

♥ Digitalis

Digitalis medication is used to improve the strength and pumping action of the heart or to control the rate and rhythm of the heart. Digitalis helps your heart beat stronger and keeps it from beating too fast. This will lead to better blood circulation.

Examples of Digitalis

- Digoxin (Digitek, Lanoxin, Lanoxicaps)
- Digitoxin

Things to Remember

- ✓ Take exactly as your doctor has ordered it and at the same time every day. Do not stop taking it because you feel better.
- ✓ If you miss a dose and remember within 12 hours, take as soon as you remember. However, if it is more than 12 hours after your scheduled dose, do not take the missed dose and do not double the next dose. Continue your usual schedule. If you have any questions or miss more than one dose, call your doctor.
- ✓ Ask your doctor about checking your pulse or heart rate. Your

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doctor may want to know if your rate is slower or faster than usual.

- ✓ Your doctor may recommend a low-sodium (low salt) diet and a potassium supplement. Choose foods that are low in sodium and high in potassium and emphasize them in a well-balanced diet.
- ✓ Your doctor may check the amount of Digoxin in your body with a blood test.
- ✓ Check with your doctor or pharmacist before taking any over-the-counter medications. They could change the way your digitalis works.

Possible Side Effects

- ▼ Irregular heartbeat or changes in pulse (slow heart rate)
- ▼ Loss of appetite
- ▼ Nausea/vomiting
- ▼ Lower stomach pain
- ▼ Diarrhea
- ▼ Unusual tiredness or weakness
- ▼ Slow or irregular heartbeat
- ▼ Vision changes such as flashes or flickering of light, sensitivity to light, seeing things larger or smaller than they are, blurring, color changes (yellow or green) and seeing halos or borders on objects
- ▼ Drowsiness
- ▼ Confusion
- ▼ Depression
- ▼ Headache

▼ Fatigue, muscle weakness

These side effects may be signs that there is too much medication in your body. Contact your doctor immediately. Your dose may need to be changed. Once you and your doctor have determined the correct dose, you usually will not experience side effects if you take Digoxin exactly as prescribed.

SECTION 10

♥ **Diuretics (“Water Pills”)**

Diuretic medication reduces the amount of water in the body by increasing the flow of urine. Along with water, there is a loss of sodium in the urine. Sodium can cause your body to retain extra water which can cause your hands and feet to swell. Your heart has to work harder to pump the extra water throughout your body, which can raise your blood pressure. By losing the extra water, your heart will not have to work as hard and your blood pressure can be controlled.

Diuretics will not cure your high blood pressure but will help control it. You must continue to take it, even if you feel well, if you expect to keep your blood pressure down.

Diuretics are sometimes combined with other medications used to treat high blood pressure into a single pill.

Potassium-depleting diuretics allow potassium to be excreted in urine.

Examples of potassium-depleting diuretics

- Acetazolamide (Diamox)
- Benedroflumethiazide (Naturetin)
- Bumetamide (Bumex)
- Chlorthalidone (Hygroton)
- Chlorothiazide (Diuril)
- Ethacrynic Acid (Edecrin)
- Furosemide (Lasix)
- Hydrochlorothiazide (Hydrodiuril, HCTZ, Esidrex)
- Hydroflumethiazide (Diucardin)
- Indapamide (Lozol)
- Methyclothiazide (Enduron)
- Metolazone (Zaroxolyn)
- Polythiazide (Renese)
- Torsemide (Demadex)
- Trichlormethiazide (Naqua)

Potassium-sparing diuretics do not allow potassium to be lost in urine.

Examples of potassium-sparing diuretics

- Amiloride HCl (Midamor)
- Eplerenone (Inspra)
- Spironolactone (Aldactone)
- Triamterene (Dyrenium)

Examples of combination diuretics

- Amiloride/Hydrochlorothiazide (Moduretic)
- Spironolactone/Hydrochlorothiazide (Aldactazide)
- Triamterene/Hydrochlorothiazide (Dyazide, Maxzide)

Things to remember:

- ✓ You may notice an increase in urine or frequency of urination.

To keep this from affecting sleep:

- A. If you are to take a single dose each day, take it in the morning after breakfast.
- B. If you are to take more than one dose a day, take the last dose no later than 6 p.m.

- ✓ There is no need to change how much fluid you drink while taking diuretics.
- ✓ If you take a potassium-depleting diuretic, your doctor may want you to eat or drink foods that have a high potassium content, or instruct you to take a potassium supplement.
- ✓ If you take a potassium-sparing diuretic, it will probably not be necessary for you to take extra potassium medication. Check with your doctor first.
- ✓ Dizziness, or lightheadedness may occur, especially when getting up from a sitting or lying position. Getting up slowly may help. Alcohol may make this effect worse.
- ✓ Sensitivity to sunlight may occur. Use sunscreens and wear protective clothing until tolerance is determined.
- ✓ Do not take other medications without your doctor's approval. This includes nonprescription medicines for appetite control, asthma, colds, cough, hay fever or sinus problems.

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Possible side effects

- ▼ Dry mouth*
- ▼ Thirst*
- ▼ Irregular heart beat*
- ▼ Nausea, vomiting*
- ▼ Mood changes*
- ▼ Muscle cramps or pain*
- ▼ Unusual weakness or tiredness*
- ▼ Loss of appetite
- ▼ Joint pain
- ▼ Impotence
- ▼ Sensitivity to sunlight
- ▼ Skin rash or hives
- ▼ Unusual bleeding or bruising

**Signs of potassium loss. Notify your doctor.*

SECTION 11

♥ **Combination Drugs**

Combination drugs are pills that contain two or more medicines in one tablet. They offer the advantage of decreasing the number of pills that one takes and decreasing cost. Below is a list of some combination drugs.

ACE Inhibitors + Diuretics

Benazepril + HCTZ (Lotensin HCT)
Captopril + HCTZ (Capozide)
Enalapril + HCTZ (Vaseretic)
Lisinopril + HCTZ (Prinzide, Zestoretic)
Moexipril + HCTZ (Uniretic)

Beta Blocker + Diuretic

Atenolol + Chlorthalidone (Tenoretic)
Bisoprolol + HCTZ (Ziac)
Metoprolol + HCTZ (Lopressor HCT)
Nadolol + Bendroflumethazide (Corzide)
Propranolol + HCTZ (Inderide)
Timolol + HCTZ (Timolide)

Calcium Channel Blocker

+ ACE Inhibitor

Amlodipine + Benazepril (Lotrel)
Felodipine + Enalapril (Lexxel)
Verapamil + Trandolapril (Tarka)

SECTION 12

♥ **Lipid Lowering Medications**

High levels of cholesterol and/or triglycerides in the blood may block blood vessels and increase the risk of developing heart or blood vessel disease. Lipid lowering agents work best when used along with a low-cholesterol, low-fat diet.

How they work

HMG-COA reductase inhibitors are used to lower the levels of cholesterol and triglycerides in the blood. They do this by reducing the production of cholesterol by the body and by increasing the rate at which the body removes cholesterol from the blood.

Examples of Lipid Lowering Medications

A. HMG-COA Reductase Inhibitors

- Atorvastatin (Lipitor)
- Lovastatin (Mevacor)
- Pravastatin (Pravachol)
- Simvastatin (Zocor)
- Fluvastatin (Lescol)
- Rosuvastatin (Crestor)

Things to remember

- ✓ You should follow a proper diet and exercise program in addition to taking your medication.
- ✓ **Lovastatin** should be taken with your evening meal. If you are taking it twice a day, it should be taken with the morning and evening meals.
- ✓ **Simvastatin** should be taken once daily in the evening (without regard to meals).
- ✓ **Atorvastatin** or **Rosuvastatin** can be taken any time of the day without regard to meals.
- ✓ **Fluvastatin** and **Pravastatin** should be taken at bedtime without regard to meals.
- ✓ Notify your doctor if you develop unexplained headache, muscle pain, tenderness or weakness, nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea, particularly if accompanied by a fever or general body discomfort.
- ✓ Lab tests may be required during treatment. These tests may include blood counts, cholesterol

level, liver function tests, and eye exams (for lovastatin only).

CAUTION

Do not take these medications if you are pregnant.

Possible Side Effects

- ▼ Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, constipation, gas, indigestion
- ▼ Headache, dizziness, weakness, sleeplessness
- ▼ Cold or flu-like symptoms, cough
- ▼ Rash, itching
- ▼ Muscle pain, chest pain, fever, blurred vision

B. Bile Acid Sequestrants

How they work

These drugs are used to lower cholesterol. They do this by binding to bile acids in your intestines and preventing their absorption. Your body must replace these bile acids by converting cholesterol to bile acids.

Examples

- Cholestyramine (Questran)
- Colestipol (Colestid)
- Colesevelam (Welchol)

Things to remember

- ✓ Bile acid sequestrants are most effective when used with a low cholesterol, low saturated fat diet.
- ✓ They may interfere with the action of other drugs taken at the same time. Take other medications either 1 hour before or 4 to 6 hours after the bile acid sequestrants.

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- ✓ They should be taken just before eating or with meals.
- ✓ They may cause constipation. A laxative, stool softener or drinking liquids may be helpful.
- ✓ Periodic lab tests will be required during treatment. Tests may include blood count, triglycerides, and cholesterol.
- ✗ **DO NOT** take the powder or granules in the dry form. It must be mixed with any beverage, very liquid soups or cereals, or pulpy fruits (applesauce or crushed pineapple).
- ✓ Increase your daily intake of liquids while taking this medicine.

Possible Side Effects

- ▼ Severe constipation, fatty or black stools, gas, belching, nausea, vomiting, heartburn, diarrhea, loss of appetite
- ▼ Headache, anxiety, dizziness, fatigue
- ▼ Asthma, wheezing
- ▼ Itching, hives
- ▼ Unusual bleeding from gums or rectum
- ▼ Deficiencies of fat soluble vitamins A and D

C. Fibric Acid Derivatives

Examples

- Gemfibrozil (Lopid)
- Fenofibrate (Antara, Lofibra, Tricor)

These drugs lower blood levels of triglycerides and cholesterol by decreasing the production of triglycerides by the body and by increasing the rate of excretion of cholesterol.

Things to remember

- ✓ Take gemfibrozil 30 minutes before the morning and evening meals.
- ✓ They are most effective when used with a low cholesterol, low saturated fat diet.
- ✓ It may cause dizziness or blurred vision - use caution when driving.
- ✓ Lab tests may be required during treatment. These may include blood counts, cholesterol and triglycerides, liver function tests, and blood glucose levels.
- ✓ Take Fenofibrate once daily with food.

Possible Side Effects

- ▼ Stomach upset, vomiting, nausea, diarrhea, constipation
- ▼ Headache, dizziness, fatigue
- ▼ Rash, itching, eczema
- ▼ Sore throat, fever, chills, muscle pain or soreness

D. Zetia

Zetia is a medication that lowers cholesterol. It works by blocking the absorption of cholesterol from your intestines during digestion. It lowers total cholesterol and LDL, but is most effective when added to another cholesterol medication.

Examples

- Zetia + Zocor (Vytorin)

Things to remember

- ✓ You should follow a heart-healthy diet and exercise program in addition to taking your medication.
- ✓ Lab tests will be required during treatment. These tests may include cholesterol and triglyceride levels and liver function tests.
- ✓ Vytorin should be taken in the evening without regard to meals.

Possible Side Effects

- ▼ Diarrhea, abdominal pain
- ▼ Fatigue, dizziness, headache
- ▼ Muscle pain, chest pain, joint pain, back pain
- ▼ Sore throat, cough

E. Nicotinic Acid (Niacin)

Niacin (in large doses) reduces cholesterol and triglyceride levels.

Examples

- Niaspan
- Niacor

Things to remember

- ✓ Skin flushing and a sensation of warmth, especially of the face and upper body, may occur. Itching, tingling, and headache may also occur. These effects usually last 30 to 60 minutes after taking a dose and usually decrease as you continue to take the medication.
- ✓ If you have persistent or bothersome flushing, taking 325mg of

aspirin a half hour before each dose of niacin may help prevent this. Check with your doctor before trying this.

- ✓ Take niacin with meals.
- ✓ Take extended release niacin at bedtime.
- ✓ When getting up from a lying or sitting position, you may become dizzy or faint. If this occurs, getting up slowly may help.

Possible Side Effects

- ▼ Flushing, itching, tingling, sensation of warmth.
- ▼ Abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea
- ▼ Dizziness, headache

SECTION 13

♥ Nitrates

Nitrates are useful in either relieving the pain of angina (chest pain) attacks or reducing the number of such attacks. Nitrates relieve chest pain by improving the supply of blood and oxygen to the heart by widening the walls in your blood vessels.

The most common nitrates are nitroglycerin and isosorbide. They are available in the following forms:

Nitroglycerin

- Sublingual tablets (Nitrostat)
- Long-acting tablets and capsules (Nitro-bid)

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- Ointment, topical (Nitro-bid, Nitrol)
- Spray, translingual (Nitrolingual)
- Transdermal patch (Minitran, Nitro-Dur, Transderm-Nitro, Nitrodisc, Deponit)

Isosorbide

- Sublingual tablets (Isordil)
- Chewable tablets (Sorbitrate)
- Oral tablets (Isordil Titrados, Sorbitrate, ISMO, Monoket)
- Long-acting tablets/capsules (Isordil Tembids, Sorbitrate SA, Imdur)

Things to remember

1. Sublingual tablets – Nitroglycerin or Isosorbide

- ✓ When you start to feel an angina attack, sit down, then place a tablet under your tongue and let it dissolve. Do not crush, chew or swallow. If angina is not relieved in 5 minutes, dissolve a second tablet under your tongue. If pain is not relieved within another 5 minutes, dissolve a third tablet. If you still have pain after taking three tablets, call 911 or your local emergency number. Do not drive yourself to the hospital.
- ✓ Take the medication before activity that normally causes your angina.
- ✓ It may cause stinging or tingling when it touches under the tongue.

- ✓ Storage: Keep in the original container. Keep the container closed tightly. Store at room temperature. Protect from moisture. Unused nitroglycerin tablets should be discarded 6 months after the original bottle is opened. Do not put any other medications in the nitroglycerin bottle.

2. Translingual spray – Nitroglycerin

- ✓ Spray onto or under the tongue. Do not inhale spray. At the onset of an angina attack, spray 1 or 2 doses onto oral mucosa. No more than 3 doses are recommended within 15 minutes. If you still have pain after 3 doses, call 911 or your local emergency number. Do not drive yourself to the hospital.
- ✓ It may be used 5 to 10 minutes before you begin an activity that normally causes your angina.

3. Sustained release capsule or tablet – Nitroglycerin or Isosorbide

- ✓ These forms are used to prevent angina attacks. They will not relieve chest pain that has already started. Long-acting forms should be taken on a regular schedule. If you miss a dose, take it as soon as you remember if your next dose is not scheduled within six hours. Do not double the dose in order to “catch up.”

- ✓ Swallow whole. Do not break, crush or chest long-acting tablets or capsules.

4. **Topical nitroglycerin ointment**

- ✓ Nitroglycerin ointment is used to prevent angina. It works too slowly to relieve pain that has already started. Occasional use of sublingual tablets may be necessary.
- ✓ Carefully read the instructions before using.
- ✓ The ointment comes with measuring papers. Use them to measure the length of the ointment and to apply the ointment to the skin. Do not use your fingers.
- ✓ The ointment can be applied to any area on the skin (not just the chest). Preferably, apply it to an area of skin with little or no hair. Do not rub or massage ointment into the skin. When reapplying ointment, remove any ointment remaining from the previous dose. Rotate application sites to prevent contact dermatitis.

5. **Transdermal nitroglycerin patches**

- ✓ Nitroglycerin patch is used to prevent angina attacks. It will not relieve chest pain that has already started. Occasional use of sublingual tablets may be necessary. Carefully read the instructions before using.
- ✓ Apply the patch once each day to a skin site free of hair and

not subject to excessive movement. Do not apply patch to the forearms or below the knees.

Avoid cuts or irritations. Rotate application site slightly each time to avoid skin irritation.

- ✓ Your physician may have you apply or remove patch at specific times of the day.

CAUTION

Patients who use nitrates **must** talk to their doctor before using any of the erectile dysfunction drugs (Viagra, Cialis, Levitra). There are several medical conditions that prevent a person from using these medications safely. Using these medications together (even hours or days apart) can lower blood flow to the heart arteries, causing a heart attack. If you have symptoms of angina or a heart attack and have used any of these drugs, you should not use your nitroglycerin. Go to the nearest Emergency Room for treatment.

You must always tell your doctor all the medications you are taking (including over-the-counter medicines) so that problems can be avoided.

Possible side effects

- ▼ Nitrates may cause headaches, a feeling of fullness in the head, flushing or redness of the skin. These side effects are usually temporary and disappear on their own. If they persist, consult your doctor.

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- ▼ You may feel dizzy, light-headed or faint, especially when getting up from a lying or sitting position. Remember to get up slowly. Alcohol may also make this effect worse.
- ▼ Other effects: blurred vision, dry mouth, appetite loss, skin rash/itching, rapid heartbeat, nausea, vomiting, restlessness.

SECTION 14

♥ Potassium Supplements

Potassium supplements are used to treat or prevent low potassium blood levels when dietary intake is too low. Low potassium levels may also be caused by illness or treatment with certain drugs (diuretics, or “water pill,” for example). Potassium is most frequently supplied as:

Examples of potassium supplements

- Slow-K
- K-Tab
- K-lyte
- K-Dur
- Kor-Con
- K-lor
- Klotrix
- Micro-K
- Kaon-Cl
- Ten-K

Potassium chloride is available in liquid, powder, capsule and tablet form.

Things to remember:

- ✓ Some people find that potassium supplements taste unpleasant or cause stomach discomfort. Taking this medication after meals or with food and a full glass of water will lessen stomach upset.
- ✓ Do not chew or crush tablets, always swallow them whole. Oral liquids, soluble powders and effervescent tablets should be mixed or dissolved in 4 to 8 ounces of cold water or juice. Drink the mixture slowly.
- ✓ Tell your doctor or pharmacist if you are taking or if you are planning to take any over-the-counter or prescription medications with potassium supplements.
- ✓ The following drugs and drug classes may interact with potassium supplements:
 - Salt substitutes
 - Anticholinergics (Banthine)
 - Spironolactone (Aldactone)
 - Triamterene (Dyrenium)
 - Amiloride (Midamor)
 - Captopril (Capoten)
 - Lisinopril (Prinivil, Zestril)
 - Enalapril (Vasotec)
 - Benazepril (Lotensin)
 - Quinapril (Accupril)
 - Fosinopril (Monopril)
 - Ramipril (Altace)
 - Moexipril (Univasc)
- ✓ Notify your doctor if you experience tingling of the hands and feet, unusual tiredness or weakness, a feeling of heaviness in the

legs, severe nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain or black stools.

Possible side effects:

- ▼ Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea
- ▼ Stomach discomfort, pain, or gas
- ▼ Skin rash
- ▼ Confusion
- ▼ Irregular heartbeat
- ▼ Unusual tiredness or weakness
- ▼ Numbness or tingling in hands or feet

SECTION 15

♥ Pain Relievers

Combination medicine containing narcotic analgesics and acetaminophen (Tylenol) are used to relieve pain after heart surgery. When used together, this combination may relieve pain better than either medication used alone.

Examples of oral analgesic combinations

Codeine and acetaminophen

- Tylenol #2
- Tylenol #3
- Tylenol #4
- Phenaphen #2
- Phenaphen #3
- Phenaphen #4

Hydrocodone and acetaminophen:

- Lorcet
- Lortab
- Hydrocet

- Vicodin
- Vicodin ES

Oxycodone and acetaminophen:

- Percocet
- Roxicet
- Endoct
- Tylox
- Oxycet
- Propoxyphene and acetaminophen: Darvocet-N 50, Darvocet-N 100, Wygesic

Things to remember:

- ✓ Take exactly as prescribed by your physician. If you think that your medicine is not relieving pain, check with your doctor before increasing the dose.
- ✓ Take with food to avoid possible nausea or vomiting.
- ✓ A stool softener or fiber laxative may be helpful since narcotic analgesics (especially codeine) may cause constipation.
- ✓ If you feel dizzy or faint when getting up from a sitting or lying position, get up slowly. Other sedating medicines may make this effect worse.
- ✗ **DO NOT** drink alcoholic beverages while taking a narcotic analgesic.
- ✗ **DO NOT** take other pain medication unless you discuss them first with your doctor. Avoid taking any medicines that contain acetaminophen or a narcotic.

CAUTIONS

You may become dizzy, drowsy, or lightheaded, or feel an exaggerated sense of well-being while taking this medication. Make sure you know how you react to this medicine before driving a car or before operating machinery.

Notify your doctor immediately if any of the following occur: severe confusion, drowsiness or weakness, seizures, diarrhea, prolonged nausea or vomiting, shortness of breath or trouble breathing, increased sweating, skin rash, or cold, clammy skin.

Possible side effects

- ▼ Dizziness or lightheadedness
- ▼ Drowsiness
- ▼ Nausea or vomiting
- ▼ Loss of appetite
- ▼ Weakness
- ▼ Blurred vision
- ▼ Constipation
- ▼ Dry mouth
- ▼ Nightmares

SECTION 16**♥ Over-The-Counter Medications**

As a patient with heart disease, you should use care when choosing an over-the-counter (OTC) drug. An inappropriate OTC product may worsen your heart disease by interfering with your prescribed medications or diet.

Please ask your doctor or pharmacist which medications are acceptable for you to take. Show them a list of the prescription medications you are taking.

The most commonly purchased OTC products are pain relievers, antacids, cold/allergy products and vitamin supplements. Below is a list of various OTC products and instructions on their use with your heart medications.

Pain Medications

The most commonly used pain medications are aspirin, acetaminophen and ibuprofen. Through each of these medications will relieve pain, you should use caution in selecting one to use.

- ✓ **Acetaminophen** (Tylenol) is a good choice for the occasional relief of pain, headache or fever. If you have a need for regular pain control, such as the pain from arthritis, talk to your doctor. Limit total daily doses to 4000mg.
- ✓ **Aspirin** (Anacin, Bayer, Bufferin, Ecotrin, Empirin) is used to treat fever, pain and inflammation. You may already be taking a low dose of aspirin to prevent the formation of blood clots. Your doctor may tell you to avoid taking additional aspirin. Some OTC products contain aspirin as an ingredient, such as Alka-Seltzer. You should read an OTC product's label or ask your pharmacist if aspirin is an ingredient. The

Cardiac Rehab staff can provide you with a list of common medications that contain aspirin.

- ✓ **Ibuprofen** (Advil, Bayer Select, Motrin OB, Nuprin) is a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) that is also used to treat fever, pain, and inflammation. Ibuprofen, and the newer NSAIDS naproxen (aleve) and ketoprofen (Orudis KT), may increase your blood pressure or decrease the amount of urine you eliminate. If you are taking a diuretic, beta-blocker, or angiotensin converting enzyme inhibitor (ACEI), you should use acetaminophen instead of a NSAID.

CAUTION

If you are taking Warfarin (Coumadin), you should avoid using aspirin or NSAID products. These medications may increase the blood thinning action of Warfarin and can increase the risk of bleeding.

Allergy/Cold Medications

Care in choosing an appropriate allergy or cold medication is important. Many oral preparations contain a decongestant to help clear a stuffy nose or head. Decongestants, like phenylephrine, phenylpropanolamine, and pseudoephedrine, may increase your heart rate or blood pressure by narrowing the blood vessels. You need to avoid using a combination cold product that contains a decongestant,

unless you've discussed it first with your doctor. If you need temporary relief of sinus pressure, a nasal decongestant (Afrin, Dristan, Duration, Neo-Synephrine) may be used. Follow the product's directions closely.

Antacids

You may already use an antacid to relieve indigestion or heartburn. However, an antacid may interact with your prescribed medications or diet restrictions. When selecting an antacid, you should choose a "low sodium" or "sodium free" product to avoid increasing the amount of sodium in your diet. Antacids that contain either no sodium or only small amounts are: Aluminum hydroxide, Di-Gel, Gas-X, Gelusil, Milk of Magnesia, Mylanta, Riopan, Roloids Sodium Free, Trilacac, and Tums. Avoid any antacids that have sodium bicarbonate as an ingredient. Products you should not use are: Alka-Seltzer, Bromo-Seltzer, Gaviscon and Sodium Bicarbonate. If you're unsure about the sodium content of an antacid, check with your pharmacist.

CAUTION

Antacids may reduce the absorption of other medications when taken together by binding to them or changing the acidity of the stomach. Medications that may be affected by antacids are: Allopurinol, Atenolol, Digoxin, Iron supplements and

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Quinidine. If you need to take an antacid while on one of these prescription medications, you should separate each dose by two hours or more.

Herbal and Natural Supplements

Some supplements sold as natural and herbal products can contain ingredients that may interfere with the medications you are taking. It is not a good idea to take over-the-counter or health food supplements without checking with your doctor or pharmacist first.

Fish Oil Capsules

In some people, part of having high lipid levels includes having high triglycerides. Fish oil capsules have been shown to lower high triglycerides. It is important to talk with your doctor before taking fish oil capsules. Taking the proper dose is required to lower triglycerides. The only side effects reported are “fish” burps and mild stomach upset.

Omacor is a fish oil supplement available only by prescription. Many others are available without a prescription.

Vitamins

Some vitamin supplements may be prescribed by your physician. They may or may not require a prescription. Always follow the directions your doctor gives you. Do not take more than the recommended amount each day.

The following lists examples of vitamins and their actions:

Examples of vitamins and their actions

- ✓ Vitamin C and Vitamin A – may promote wound healing
- ✓ Folic Acid, Vitamin B6 , and Vitamin B12 lowers the level of homocysteine in the body. Too much homocysteine may contribute to heart disease.
- ✓ Do not use over-the-counter niacin as a substitute for prescription niacin.