



Beta-Blockers

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About This Medicine

Make sure you know about each of the medicines you take. This includes why you take it, how to take it, what you can expect while you're taking it, and any warnings about the medicine.

The information provided here is general. So be sure to read the information that came with your medicine. If you have any questions or concerns, talk to your pharmacist or doctor.

What are some examples?

Here are some examples of beta-blockers. For each item in the list, the generic name is first, followed by any brand names.

- atenolol (Tenormin)
- carvedilol (Coreg)
- metoprolol (Lopressor, Toprol)
- propranolol (Inderal)

This is not a complete list of beta-blockers.

Why are beta-blockers used?

Beta-blockers are used for many heart and blood vessel problems. They relax blood vessels and make your heart beat more slowly and with less force. They lower blood pressure.

Beta-blockers may be used if you have:

- Coronary artery disease.
- Heart failure.
- High blood pressure.
- Heart rhythm problems.

Beta-blockers are also used for other health problems that are not related to the heart. These problems include migraine headaches.

Beta-blockers may help you feel better and live longer.

What about side effects?

Beta-blockers can make some people feel tired, dizzy, or lightheaded. They can also make asthma worse. In some people, heart rate or blood pressure can drop too low. If the medicine is stopped suddenly, high blood pressure, a heart attack, or dangerous heart rhythm may occur.

General information about side effects

All medicines can cause side effects. Many people don't have side effects. And minor side effects sometimes go away after a while.

But sometimes side effects can be a problem or can be serious.

If you're having problems with side effects, talk to your doctor. Your doctor may be able to lower your dose or change to a different medicine.

Always be sure you get specific information on the medicine you're taking. For a full list of side effects, check the information that came with the medicine you're using. If you have questions, talk to your pharmacist or doctor.

What are some cautions about beta-blockers?

Some cautions are:

- If you have diabetes, watch closely for symptoms of low blood sugar. Beta-blockers can hide your symptoms.
- If you have asthma, beta-blockers can make wheezing or shortness of breath worse.
- Do not suddenly stop taking a beta-blocker. This can cause high blood pressure, a heart attack, or a dangerous heart rhythm.
- Tell your doctor if you are pregnant, breastfeeding, or planning to become pregnant.
- Take your medicines exactly as prescribed. Call your doctor if you think you are having a problem with your medicine.
- Check with your doctor or pharmacist before you use any other medicines. This includes ones you buy over the counter. Make sure your doctor knows all of the medicines, vitamins, herbal products, and supplements you take. Taking some medicines together can cause problems.

General cautions for all medicines

Allergic reactions.

All medicines can cause a reaction. This can sometimes be an emergency. Before you take any new medicine, tell the doctor or pharmacist about any past allergic reactions you've had.

Drug interactions.

Sometimes one medicine may keep another medicine from working well. Or you may get a side effect you didn't expect. Medicines may also interact with certain foods or drinks, like grapefruit juice and alcohol. Some interactions can be dangerous.

Harm during pregnancy or breastfeeding.

If you are pregnant, trying to get pregnant, or breastfeeding, ask your doctor or pharmacist if all the medicines you take are safe.

Other health problems.

Before taking a medicine, be sure your doctor or pharmacist knows about all your health problems. The medicine for one health problem may affect another health problem.

Always tell your doctor or pharmacist about all the medicines you take. This includes prescription and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, herbs, and supplements. That information will help prevent serious problems.

Always be sure you get specific information on the medicine you're taking. For a full list of warnings, check the information that came with the medicine you're using. If you have questions, talk to your pharmacist or doctor.

Related Information

- Cirrhosis: Beta-Blockers for Portal Hypertension and Varices

Credits

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