



MDwise

A McLaren Company

Heart Failure: Diuretics

Diuretics help your body get rid of extra water. They are also called "water pills."

Taking these medicines can reduce your symptoms of heart failure and help you feel better.

Taking these medicines on a regular schedule will help you control fluid buildup in your body. This can reduce the chance that you will need to go to the hospital.

Examples

Loop diuretics

- Bumetanide
- Furosemide
- Torsemide

Potassium-sparing diuretics

- Amiloride
- Spironolactone

Besides being potassium-sparing, spironolactone is also an aldosterone receptor antagonist. It blocks the action of aldosterone, a hormone that can make heart failure worse. Spironolactone may be an option if you are already taking other medicines for heart failure.

How do diuretics work?

Diuretics cause the kidneys to remove more water and salt (sodium) from your body. This can help relieve swelling that happens because of heart failure.



Why are diuretics used for heart failure?

Your doctor may prescribe diuretics if you have symptoms of fluid buildup, such as trouble breathing or swelling in your legs and ankles.

Diuretics are often used with an angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitor, another type of medicine that lowers blood pressure. They may also be combined with other medicines.

How well do these medicines work?

Diuretics can help relieve some symptoms of heart failure such as swelling in the legs. It may take some time to find the right dose and the best time of day to take diuretics.

Your doctor may start you on a low dose and

then increase it as needed to reduce fluid buildup and avoid side effects.

Your doctor will want you to weigh yourself every day. This can help your doctor check your fluid loss and decide whether to adjust your medicine.

Call your doctor if you notice a sudden weight gain, such as more than 2 to 3 pounds in a day or 5 pounds in a week. (Your doctor may suggest a different range of weight gain.) A sudden weight gain may mean your heart failure is getting worse.

Eating too much salt can reverse the benefits of diuretics. Diuretic therapy should be used along with a low-salt diet.

Side effects

Ask your pharmacist about the side effects of each medicine you take. Side effects are also listed in the information that comes with your medicine.

Call your doctor right away if you have symptoms of changes in potassium levels:

- Confusion
- Dry mouth or increased thirst
- Irregular heartbeat
- Muscle cramps or pain

- Numbness or tingling in your hands, feet, or lips

Call your doctor if you think you are having a problem with your medicine.

Call 911 right away if you think you are having a serious reaction, such as trouble breathing.

What to think about

You may feel more tired or need to urinate more often when you start taking this medicine. These effects typically occur less after you have taken the medicine for a while.

If the increase in urine interferes with your sleep or daily activities, ask your doctor to help you plan a schedule for taking the medicine.

Ask your doctor if you need to take a potassium supplement. If you take a loop diuretic or thiazide diuretic, your doctor may suggest you get extra potassium because these medicines lower your potassium levels. But if you take a potassium-sparing diuretic, you do not need to get extra potassium.