



# MDwise

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## Heart Failure: Vasodilators

Vasodilators make blood vessels wider. They are often combined with other medicines to treat heart failure.

### Examples

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- Hydralazine
- Hydralazine and isosorbide dinitrate

### How do vasodilators work?

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Vasodilators help widen, or dilate, blood vessels. This reduces blood pressure and makes it easier for the heart to pump blood.

### Why are these medicines used for heart failure?

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When you have heart failure, your heart does not pump as well, so opening narrowed blood vessels is important.

This reduces how hard your heart needs to work. It may help keep blood from backing up in your heart and lungs.

### How well do they work?

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When used with other medicines for heart failure, vasodilators may help relieve symptoms and lower the risk of early death. This benefit has been shown in African Americans but has not been shown in other groups of people.

### Side effects

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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. Common side effects of these medicines include:

- Dizziness or lightheadedness.
- Headaches.
- Flushing, or feeling warm, in the face and neck.
- Nausea.
- Swelling from fluid buildup.

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

**Do not use erection-enhancing medicines** such as sildenafil (Viagra), tadalafil (Cialis), or vardenafil (Levitra) if you take a nitrate. These medicines taken together can cause

very low blood pressure, which can cause

serious problems, including death.



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