



What Is High Blood Pressure Medicine?

Your doctor has prescribed medicine to help lower your blood pressure. You also need to make the other lifestyle changes that will help reduce blood pressure, including: reaching and maintaining a healthy weight, lowering sodium (salt) intake, eating a heart-healthy diet, being more regularly physically active, and limiting alcohol to no more than one drink a day (for women) or two drinks a day (for men). Following your overall therapy plan will help you get on the road to a healthier life!



Taking your medicine the way your doctor tells you to is key to getting your blood pressure down where it belongs!

What should I know about taking medicine?

- Your doctor may prescribe one or more drugs to bring your blood pressure down to normal.
- The medicines work in different ways to help lower blood pressure.
- Medicine only works when you take it regularly.
- Don't ever stop taking medicine on your own.
- Even after your blood pressure is lowered, you may still need to take medicine — perhaps for your lifetime — to keep your blood pressure normal.

How can I remember to take my medicine?

Sometimes it's hard to keep track of your medicine. But to be safe, you must take it properly. Here are some good ways:

- Take your medicine at the same time each day.
- Take medicine along with daily events, like brushing your teeth.

- Use a weekly pill box with separate sections for each day or time of day.
- Ask family and friends to help remind you.
- Use a medicine calendar.
- Set a reminder on your smartphone.

What types of drugs are there?

- **DIURETICS** rid the body of excess sodium (salt) and water and help control blood pressure.
- **BETA BLOCKERS** reduce the heart rate and the heart's output of blood, which lowers blood pressure.
- **VASODILATORS, ANGIOTENSIN-CONVERTING ENZYME (ACE) INHIBITORS, ANGIOTENSIN II RECEPTOR BLOCKERS (ARBs)** and **CALCIUM CHANNEL BLOCKERS** relax and open up the narrowed blood vessels and lower blood pressure.

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What are their side effects?

For many people, high blood pressure medicine can effectively lower blood pressure, but some types may cause side effects. Tell your doctor if you have side effects, but don't stop taking your medicine on your own to avoid them. Here are some of the side effects that may occur:

- Weakness, tiredness or drowsiness
- Erectile dysfunction
- Cold hands and feet
- Depression or sluggishness
- Trouble sleeping or nightmares
- Slow or fast heartbeat
- Skin rash
- Loss of taste or dry mouth
- Dry, constant cough; stuffy nose or asthma symptoms
- Ankle swelling, leg cramps or aches in the joints
- Headache, dizziness or swelling around the eyes
- Constipation or diarrhea
- Fever or anemia



HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

- 1** Call **1-800-AHA-USA1** (1-800-242-8721), or visit **heart.org** to learn more about heart disease and stroke.
- 2** Sign up to get *Heart Insight*, a free magazine for heart patients and their families, at **heartinsight.org**.
- 3** Connect with others sharing similar journeys with heart disease and stroke by joining our Support Network at **heart.org/supportnetwork**.

Do you have questions for the doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write your questions for the next time you see your healthcare provider.

For example:

Should I avoid any foods or medicines?

What reactions or side effects should I expect?

My Questions:

We have many other fact sheets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk, manage disease or care for a loved one. Visit **heart.org/answersbyheart** to learn more.