

Beta-Blockers

acebutolol (Sectral[®], Monitan[®])

atenolol (Tenormin[®])

bisoprolol (Monacor[®])

carvedilol (Coreg[®])

labetalol (Trandate[®])

metoprolol (Lopresor[®])

nadolol (Corgard[®])

propranolol (Inderal[®])

sotalol (Sotacor[®])

Pharmacy Services

This is intended as a general reference.

It does not replace the advice given to you by your healthcare provider.

What are beta-blockers used for?

We use beta-blockers for any of these reasons:

- to prevent chest pain (angina)
- to treat high blood pressure (hypertension)
- to treat heart failure
- to prevent irregular heartbeat (arrhythmias)
- to prevent heart attacks
- to treat some symptoms of anxiety, tremors, or migraines

In people with irregular heart rhythms, beta-blockers are used to control the heart rate, keeping it from beating too fast.

Although beta-blockers do not make the heart beat at a regular pace, they can help reduce symptoms a person feels with irregular heartbeats.

In people with heart failure, beta-blockers are used to strengthen the heart muscle and help the heart pump more effectively.

Why should I take this medication?

If you have an irregular heartbeat like atrial fibrillation, the rapid, irregular contractions of your heart can weaken the heart muscle, making it harder for your heart to pump well. Beta-blockers help to control the heart rate, making your heart pump more effectively.

If you have had a heart attack, beta-blockers can help lower the chances of having another heart attack or other problems that could cause death.

If you have heart failure or are more likely to get coronary artery disease, you might benefit from taking a beta-blocker.

If you have high blood pressure, taking a beta-blocker may reduce the risk of a heart attack, stroke, or death.

How do beta-blockers work?

Beta-blockers block the effects of your body's stress hormones. Blocking stress hormones causes your heart to beat more slowly and with less force. Beta-blockers also relax blood vessels which lowers blood pressure. A slower heartbeat and a lower blood pressure reduces the work of the heart and improves its pumping action.

How do I take beta-blockers?

- Take your beta-blocker exactly as prescribed.
- Take it with water, with or without food
- It is best to take the medication at the same time each day so you don't miss a dose.
- Some beta-blockers are taken once a day and others 2 times a day in the morning and evening.
- Some extended release tablets can be cut in half. Swallow the half without chewing. Check with your pharmacist.
- How much you take can change several times before finding the best dose for you.
- If you do miss a dose, take it as soon as you remember. If you remember the next day or close to the time of your next dose, just take your next scheduled dose.
Do not double the dose to make up for the missed dose.
- **Do not** stop taking this medication or adjust your dose without first talking to your doctor or pharmacist.

What should I expect?

While taking beta-blockers, your pulse will be slower. If you have atrial fibrillation, your symptoms should improve.

Your blood pressure might drop soon after starting a beta-blocker. You might feel dizzy or lightheaded for the first few days, but this should improve over time. When getting up from sitting or lying positions, move slowly to limit these effects.

What should I watch for?

Most people tolerate beta-blockers well. Some side effects to watch for:

- feeling lightheaded or dizzy
- feeling tired all the time (fatigue)
- cold hands or feet
- shortness of breath
- change in sex drive or ability to perform

Tell your doctor or pharmacist if any of these side effects bother you, don't go away, or get worse.

Get medical care right away if your heartbeat is regularly less than 50 beats a minute.



Other helpful points:

Some substances can interact with this type of medicine. Check with your pharmacist or doctor before starting new medicines or supplements, including herbal medicines, and alternative and natural products.

Some medicines should not be taken during pregnancy. Tell your doctor if you are pregnant or plan to become pregnant.