

# Dihydropyridine Calcium Channel Blockers

(DHP CCBs)

**amlodipine** (Norvasc<sup>®</sup>)

**felodipine** (Renedil<sup>®</sup>, Plendil<sup>®</sup>)

**nifedipine** (Adalat XL<sup>®</sup>)

## Pharmacy Services

This is intended as a general reference.

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



## What are calcium channel blockers used for?

We use this type of medicine for either of these reasons:

- to prevent chest pain (angina)
- to treat high blood pressure (hypertension)

## Why should I take this medication?

Calcium channel blockers lower blood pressure. Lowering blood pressure can help reduce the risk of heart attack, stroke, and other complications.

If you have angina, calcium channel blockers can help manage your symptoms when taken daily.

## How do calcium channel blockers work?

Calcium helps your heart muscle and blood vessels contract. Calcium channel blockers block the effects of calcium on blood vessels, allowing them to relax and open wider. This reduces the force needed for your heart to pump blood around your body.

## What should I expect?

You might notice a drop in your blood pressure soon after starting a calcium channel 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.

You might get constipated while taking this medicine. Increase the amount of fibre in your diet such as bran, fruits, and vegetables. Increase the amount of fluid you drink each day unless your doctor has advised you do limit fluids.

## How do I take calcium channels blockers?

- Take your calcium channel blocker exactly as prescribed.
- Some calcium channel blockers are taken once a day and others are taken several times a day.
- How much you take can change several times before finding the best dose for you.
- It is best to take the medication at the same time each day so you don't miss a dose.
- 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 watch for?

Most people tolerate calcium channel blockers well. Some side effects to watch for:

- feeling lightheaded or dizzy
- feeling sick to your stomach (nausea) or throwing up (vomit)
- swelling in the ankles or feet
- constipation

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 you have worsening chest pain or you have chest pain while resting.



## 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.