

Diuretics

chlorthalidone (Hygroton[®])

furosemide (Lasix[®])

hydrochlorothiazide (Hydrodiuril[®])

indapamide (Lozide[®])

metolazone (Zaroxolyn[®])

Pharmacy Services

This is intended as a general reference.

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

What are diuretics used for?

People often call diuretics (say *dye-ur-et-iks*) their “water pills”.

We use diuretics for any of these reasons:

- To get rid of excess fluid in the body
- To improve symptoms of heart failure
- To treat high blood pressure

If you have heart failure, your heart might not pump blood around the body as well as it normally would. Heart failure can lead to fluid building up and collecting in the lungs and body tissues.

Why should I take this medicine?

When the excess fluid collects in the lungs, it can cause shortness of breath, especially when you increase your activity level or when you lie down. When excess fluid collects in body tissues, it can cause swelling in the legs, hands, and belly.

Diuretics help get rid of the excess fluid. This helps reduce the work of the heart, which helps it to pump better.

For people with heart failure, diuretics can improve symptoms of heart failure.

For people with high blood pressure, some diuretics can reduce the chances of heart attack, stroke, and death.

How do diuretics work?

Diuretics help your kidneys remove salt and water from your body. This reduces the excess fluid that has built up in the lungs and body tissues.

What should I expect?

You should notice an improvement within a few days of starting or when increasing the dose of the diuretic. This means you should notice that your breathing is easier and the swelling in your legs or hands has reduced.

Once the dose is the right amount for you (your maintenance dose), you might not notice any changes in your symptoms each day. But if you were to stop taking your diuretic, your symptoms might return.

How do I take diuretics?

- Take your diuretic exactly as prescribed.
You might take the diuretic regularly each day or only as needed. How you take it will depend on your heart health, other medicines you take, and your medical condition.
- You might find you have to go to the bathroom more often within the few hours after taking the medicine.
Because of this it is best to take it in the morning.
- It is also best to take the medicine 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 medicine or adjust your dose without first talking to your healthcare provider.

What should I watch for?

Most people tolerate diuretics well. Some side effects to watch for include:

- feeling lightheaded or dizzy
- feeling tired all the time (fatigue)
- muscle cramps
- urinating (peeing) more
- changes in hearing

Contact your pharmacist or doctor if any side effects become bothersome or get worse.

You might need to go for blood tests to make sure your body levels of sodium (salt), potassium, and other electrolytes remain normal.

Call your doctor if you notice increasing shortness of breath, trouble breathing while lying down, swelling of the feet or hands, or a sudden change in your body weight. Your doctor might need to adjust the dose of the diuretic.



Other helpful points

Some substances can interact with this 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.