

Non-Dihydropyridine Calcium Channel Blockers

(Non-DHP CCBs)

diltiazem (Tiazac[®], Cardizem[®])

verapamil (Isoptin[®])

Pharmacy Services

This is intended as a general reference.

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

What are non-dihydropyridine calcium channel blockers used for?

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

- to slow the heart rate down in atrial fibrillation and other irregular heart rhythms (arrhythmias)
- to prevent chest pain (angina)
- to treat high blood pressure (hypertension)
- to prevent migraine headaches

Why should I take this medication?

For atrial fibrillation, this type of medicine might help the heart work better by slowing down the heart rate. This would keep the effects of the atrial fibrillation to a minimum. Rapid, irregular, and uncoordinated contractions of the heart can lead to weakening of the heart muscle. The heart does not pump as well with a weakened heart muscle.

This type of medicine also lowers blood pressure. Lowering blood pressure can help reduce the risk of heart attack, stroke, and other complications.

How does this medicine work?

Calcium helps your heart muscle and blood vessels contract. This type of medicine blocks the effects of calcium. This slows the heart rate down and relaxes blood vessels.

Together, this lowers the blood pressure. A lower blood pressure reduces the workload on the heart, which improves pump action. Better pump action increases the blood flow to the heart muscle and reduces or prevents chest pain (angina).

What should I expect?

If you are taking this medicine for atrial fibrillation, your pulse will be slower and your symptoms should improve. To keep heart rate under control, some people take this medicine regularly for a long time. People often take this type of medicine with other medicines used to control heart rate and blood pressure.

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.

If taking verapamil, you might get constipated. 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 this medicine exactly as prescribed.
- Some people take this medicine once a day and others take them 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 this medicine well. Some side effects to watch for:

- feeling lightheaded or dizzy
- swelling in the ankles or feet
- constipation (with verapamil)

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.

It is best not to drink large amounts of grapefruit juice. This can increase the amount of this medicine in your blood.

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