

# Cardiac Medications

**The information contained in this leaflet is general in nature and designed for use as an educational aid only. It does not cover all possible uses, actions, precautions, side effects, contraindications or interactions of this medicine. If any of the information in this leaflet causes you special concern or if you want additional information about your medicines and its use, check with your doctor or pharmacist.**



## General information

The overall aims of medications are to reduce signs and symptoms of cardiac problems, and reduce the risk of more cardiac events.

As well as prescribing treatment medication, your doctor will prescribe preventative medication. It is important to keep taking these long term or until directed by your doctor. **Read all instructions carefully and take your medication at the same time each day.**

## Information in this booklet

Most medications used in heart conditions will be in this booklet, listed by their generic drug name alphabetically under the medication group they belong to.

## Why do I need so many medications?

Heart Disease covers a wide variety of conditions. There are many different medicines used in the treatment of heart disease.

- There is no “one-size-fits-all” and some medications treat multiple conditions.
- Your doctor will select a combination of medications that are most likely to be effective and safe for your individual needs.
- Side effects can be reduced by using a second agent rather than increasing the dose of just one.
- More medicines do not mean that you have a more serious illness.
- **Do not stop taking medications without first consulting your doctor.**
- If your medications have changed, and you have medication at home you no longer require – take them in to your usual pharmacy for safe disposal. Do not stockpile medications.
- It is a great idea to keep an up to date medication list.

## Expiry dates

Always check expiry dates on medications. Their safety and efficacy cannot be guaranteed past their expiry dates.

# What to do if you miss a dose

## The general rule:

If you remember before going to bed, take the medicine.

If you remember the next day – skip your missed dose, and take your next dose as usual.

## **DON'T DOUBLE UP!**

*(Exceptions to this rule are dabigatran and warfarin – please see the section on anticoagulants for more information).*

## Storage of medications

- Keep in a cool and dry place out of direct sunlight.
- Keep out of reach of children and pets.

## Grapefruit

You may have noticed a yellow sticker on your medication warning you to avoid grapefruit and its juices.

- Grapefruit may increase the amount of medication in the blood. This increases the risk of side effects.
- The effect may last for 24hours - best to avoid grapefruit and grapefruit products altogether.
- Effects of other citrus:
  - Also not recommended: Pomelos, Seville (sour) oranges.
  - NO PROBLEMS WITH: Sweet oranges, lemons, mandarins, tangelos, tangerines and limes.

Some common medications affected: Felodipine, amlodipine, diltiazem, verapamil, atorvastatin, simvastatin, amiodarone.

## Herbal medication

- Often herbal medications or “natural supplements” haven’t undergone clinical trials, and may have no proven benefit.
- Can have harmful effects.
- Aren’t subject to government regulation.
- Herbal medicines may interact with your prescribed medicines – please check with your pharmacist.
- Please let your doctor know if you are taking, or considering taking, any herbal products.

# The triple whammy

The kidneys play a major role in the regulation of blood pressure.

Each of these medicines affects renal function, either directly or indirectly.

- ACE inhibitors.
- Diuretics.
- Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs).

**Together** these 3 types of medicines can have a disastrous effect on the kidneys by reducing the blood flow through the kidney. This can cause serious kidney injury.

If you are on an ACE inhibitor and a diuretic, **AVOID** all NSAIDs unless prescribed by your doctor. If you require something for pain, paracetamol is generally safe (if taken as directed).

Let your pharmacist know, and they can help guide your choice in pain relief.

Some examples of NSAIDs: Diclofenac (Voltaren); Ibuprofen (Nurofen); Naproxen (Naprogenic, Sonafam), Celecoxib (Celebrex).

## **Angiotensin converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors**

### **Medications in this group:**

Captopril; Cilazapril (Zapril); Enalapril; Lisinopril; Perindopril; Quinapril (Accupril).

### **Also in combination with a diuretic:**

Cilazapril + Hydrochlorothiazide (Inhibace Plus); Quinapril + Hydrochlorothiazide (Accuretic).

### **About your medicine**

ACE Inhibitors lower blood pressure, reduce the workload on the heart and improve heart function. This helps to reduce symptoms of a weak heart (heart failure) and makes it easier for the heart to pump blood around the body. ACE Inhibitors help to protect the heart against heart attacks.

### **How to take your medicine**

Most ACE inhibitors may be taken with or without food.

## **Possible side effects of this medicine**

- This medicine may make you feel light-headed or dizzy; rise slowly from sitting or standing positions.
- Diarrhoea or nausea.
- A skin rash can appear soon after starting an ACE inhibitor; however it usually disappears as you continue treatment. If it is associated with muscle or joint pain or fever then contact your doctor immediately.
- A dry, irritating cough may occur in the first 6 months of treatment. See your doctor if this occurs.
- Difficulty breathing or swelling of the mouth or tongue. This requires your medication to be stopped. See a doctor as soon as possible!

## **Alpha blockers**

### **Medications in this group:**

Doxazosin; Prazosin; Terazosin

### **About your medicine**

Alpha-blockers lower blood pressure; reduce the risk of stroke or heart attack, and eye or kidney damage.

These medications are also helpful for urinary symptoms in males caused by an enlarged prostate.

### **How to take your medicine**

When starting an alpha-blocker, or when a dose is changed, take the tablets at night to avoid the effects of a large drop in blood pressure, i.e. dizziness and possible collapse.

## **Possible side effects of this medicine**

Dizziness may occur, care should be taken when getting up from a lying or sitting position.

Other side effects include:

- Low blood pressure on rising (postural hypotension).
- Dizziness, headache.
- Nasal congestion.
- Sexual dysfunction.
- Lack of energy.

- Diarrhoea.
- Increased frequency of urination.

## **Amiodarone**

Amiodarone (Aratac, Cordarone X).

### **About your medicine**

Amiodarone is used to control a fast or irregular heartbeat.

Amiodarone works by lengthening the gap between heart beats, helping to make the heart rate slower and more regular; this in turn makes each beat more effective.

### **How to take your medicine**

Swallow amiodarone tablets whole with a glass of water.

Higher daily doses are used when first starting amiodarone to ensure it starts to work as soon as possible. This will eventually reduce to ONCE a day only. Make sure you know when this is going to happen. If you are confused double check with your pharmacist or doctor.

Avoid grapefruit and its juice.

The brands of amiodarone are slightly different. Stick to the same brand of amiodarone- either Aratac or Cordarone X.

### **Possible side effects of this medicine**

See your doctor if any of the following is troublesome:

- Nausea.
- Small cloudy spots forming on the eyeball. These usually go away after you stop amiodarone and they rarely affect your sight.
- Some people can become more sensitive to sunlight - always wear sunscreen, sunhat, sunglasses even if it is cloudy.
- Skin discolouration or rash.
- Tremor, difficulty sleeping or vivid dreams.
- Metallic taste in the mouth.

Tell your doctor immediately if you notice any of the following:

- Yellowing of the skin or eyes or discomfort in the right upper abdominal area.

- Symptoms of thyroid problems including weight loss or weight gain, restlessness, heat or cold intolerance, hair thinning, sweating, or swelling of your neck (goitre).
- A feeling or “pins and needles” or numbness in the hands, legs or feet.
- Muscle weakness, uncontrolled movements or poor coordination.
- Shortness of breath or a dry cough.

## **Angiotensin II blockers**

### **Medications in the group:**

Candesartan (Atacand, Candestar); Losartan (Cozaar)

### **Also in combination with a diuretic:**

Losartan + Hydrochlorothiazide

## **About your medicine**

Angiotensin II blockers lower blood pressure, reduce the workload on the heart and improve heart function. This helps to reduce symptoms of a weak heart (heart failure) and makes it easier for the heart to pump blood around the body. Angiotensin II blockers help to protect the heart against heart attacks.

## **How to take your medicine**

Try and take your tablets at the same time each day. It does not matter whether you take them with or without food.

## **Possible side effects of this medicine**

- Dizziness or light-headedness; especially if you sit or stand up too quickly.
- A dry, irritating cough.
- Diarrhoea, nausea or stomach upset.
- Unusual tiredness or fatigue.
- Skin rash, itchiness or hives-these.
- Difficulty swallowing or breathing, or swelling of the face, mouth or tongue-this is called “angioedema”.

## **Anticoagulants**

When you start an anticoagulant it is important to get some extra information from your doctor or pharmacist. The information in this leaflet covers only the basics.

### **Medications in the group:**

Dabigatran (Pradaxa); Warfarin (Coumadin, Marevan)

### **About your medicine**

Some heart conditions such as Atrial Fibrillation (AF); Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT); Pulmonary Embolism (PE); myocardial infarction (MI), or stroke increase your risk of blood clots forming.

Dabigatran and Warfarin help slow down blood from forming clots.

Warfarin requires blood test monitoring (INR), as each person's response to the medication is individual. Dabigatran may occasionally need a blood test to check kidney function.

The effect of warfarin can be reversed using vitamin K. This is why it is important to maintain a balanced and consistent diet, as some of our foods (such as green leafy vegetables) can be high in vitamin K content.

There are reversal agents for both dabigatran and warfarin, and may be used in emergencies.

### **How to take your medicine**

**Dabigatran** should be taken twice daily – one capsule in the morning and one capsule in the evening. It should be taken with water and can be taken with or without food.

Dabigatran must be kept in its original container, do not repack tablets into daily or weekly pill boxes.

**Warfarin** is taken ONCE a day, preferably at the same time each evening. Blood tests are carried out in the morning, so that if a dose change is necessary, the GP nurse can contact you before your next dose is due.

Once a maintenance dose has been established the frequency of blood tests will lessen.



## **What to do if you miss a dose**

### **Dabigatran:**

A forgotten dose may be taken up to 6 hours before the next dose. If it is less than 6 hours before your next dose, DO NOT take the missed dose. If you are unsure contact your GP nurse, doctor or pharmacist.

### **Warfarin:**

If you miss a dose, but remember on the same day (before midnight); take it as soon as you remember.

If it is the next day, skip the dose you missed and take your next dose when you are meant to.

Do NOT double up the dose to make up for your missed dose.

To ensure you get the best benefits from your medicine try not to miss taking any tablets or capsules. Find a way that helps you remember to take them at the same times each day.

## **Possible side effects of this medicine**

Dabigatran is generally well tolerated but some patients do experience heart burn. This can be reduced by taking with a full glass of water after a meal.

Both medications increase your risk of bleeding.

Keep an eye out for:

- Skin rashes or changes in skin colour.
- Stomach ache.
- Fever.
- Nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea.

## **Take care with**

- Large changes in diet - especially foods that have a high content of vitamin K (warfarin only).
- Diets high in fats and oils.
- Acute illness (e.g. diarrhoea or vomiting).
- Reduced kidney function.
- Reduced liver function.
- Watch out for interactions with some herbal medications - ask your pharmacist or doctor for more information.

## **Speak to your doctor if the following apply to you:**

- Pregnant or planning to be.
- Severe liver or kidney disease.
- Surgery.
- Uncontrolled or severe hypertension.

## **Antiplatelets**

### **Medications in the group:**

Aspirin (Disprin, Solprin, Cardiprin, Cartia, Aspec, Heartcare); Clopidogrel (Plavix); Ticagrelor (Brillinta).

### **About your medicine**

Antiplatelets help to prevent blood from clotting in your blood vessels by reducing the “stickiness” of platelets which are the small blood cells that can clump together to form a clot.

This helps to reduce the risk of heart attacks and strokes.

Aspirin is also used for pain relief; however, the dose you need for stopping the blood from clotting is much smaller than the dose you would need to relieve pain.

You may be prescribed a second antiplatelet medication such as clopidogrel or ticagrelor to provide extra protection against blood clots. This is usually reviewed after one year. Clopidogrel is sometime prescribed instead of aspirin if aspirin is not tolerated.

### **How to take your medicine**

Aspirin and Clopidogrel are taken, at the same once a day, with a glass of water. Ticagrelor is taken twice a day (i.e. morning and at night).

If you are taking a soluble form of aspirin (e.g. Disprin, Solprin or Ethics dispersible) it is important to completely dissolve the tablet in water before taking it to reduce stomach irritation.

Cartia, Ethics EC, Aspec and Heartcare are specially coated to help protect the stomach lining; these tablets should be swallowed whole with a large glass of water.

Aspirin, clopidogrel and ticagrelor can be taken with or without food, taking it with food may help to reduce any stomach irritation.

## **Possible side effects of this medicine**

- Nausea, stomach discomfort or heartburn.
- Wheezing, difficulty breathing or swallowing can occur in some people who have asthma or other lung disease.
- Vomiting blood or material that looks like coffee grounds, unusual bruising or bleeding, bloody or black tarry stools. These side effects are rare, but should be reported to your doctor as soon as possible.

If side effects are troublesome or continue, then check with your doctor.

## **Beta blockers**

### **Medications in the group:**

Atenolol; Bisoprolol (Bosvate); Carvedilol (Dilatrend); Celiprolol (Celol); Metoprolol (Betaloc, Lopressor, Slow-Lopressor); Propranolol (Cardinol LA); Sotalol.

## **About your medicine**

Beta-blockers help to protect the heart against heart attacks. After a heart attack, they also help to prevent irregular heartbeats from developing or more damage to the heart occurring.

Actions include:

- Lowers high blood pressure, reduces the workload of the heart and improves heart function.
- Reduces angina (chest pain).
- Treat disturbance or symptoms of a rapid or irregular heartbeat.

## **How to take your medicine**

Celiprolol (Celol) and Sotalol should be taken on an empty stomach, i.e. ONE hour before food or TWO hours after food.

Sotalol should not be taken within 2 hours of iron, antacids or calcium. Other beta-blockers can be taken with or without food, but it is recommended to take them at the same time each day.

## **Possible side effects of this medicine**

- Dizziness or light headedness.
- If you are a diabetic you may lose some of the warning signs of low blood sugar (e.g. trembling and palpitations); you may need to measure your blood sugar levels more often.

- Beta-blockers may not be suitable for patients with asthma or COPD – check with your doctor.

Some Beta-blockers can also cause:

- Unusual tiredness, fatigue or drowsiness.
- Coldness, numbness or tingling in the hands or feet, muscle cramps.
- Swelling of the ankles, feet or lower leg.
- Sexual dysfunction.
- Difficulty sleeping, nightmares and vivid dreams.

Side effects may taper off after a few weeks, or changing to another type of beta-blocker may resolve these problems, you will need to discuss these side effects with your doctor should they occur.

## **Calcium channel blockers**

### **Medications in the group:**

Amlodipine; Diltiazem (Cardizem, Dilzem); Felodipine (Plendil); Isradapine (Dynacric); Nifedipine (Nyefax Retard, Adalat); Verapamil (Isoptin).

### **About your medicine**

Calcium channel blockers relax and widen blood vessels to lower blood pressure, improve blood and oxygen supply to the heart and reduce the number of attacks of angina.

Some Calcium channel blockers help to treat or reduce the symptoms of a rapid or irregular heartbeat.

Calcium channel blockers do not affect dietary calcium needed for strong bones.

### **How to take your medicine**

Avoid grapefruit and grapefruit juice.

Some preparations are specially designed to slowly release medication over a period of time, these preparations should be swallowed whole with a glass of water.

### **Possible side effects of this medicine**

- Light-headed or dizziness.

- Flushing, a feeling of warmth or headaches - these side effects usually occur when you first start taking the medicine, and will disappear as you carry on with treatment.
- Leg cramps.
- Constipation – occurs more commonly with verapamil.
- Swelling of the ankles, feet or lower legs – occurs more commonly with felodipine, amlodipine or nifedipine.
- Lethargy or tiredness can also occur in some people.

## **Cholesterol lowering medication**

### **Medications in the group:**

Atorvastatin (Lipitor, Lorstat, Zarator); Bezafibrate (Bezalip, Bezalip Retard); Ezetimibe (Ezemibe, Ezetrol); Gemfibrozil (Lipazil); Pravastatin (Cholvastatin); Rosuvastatin (Crestor); Simvastatin (Lipex, Simvarex).

### **Also in combination:**

Ezetimibe + simvastatin (Vytorin, Zimybe)

## **About your medicine**

Cholesterol is a type of fat found in the blood. There are two sources of cholesterol – it comes from your diet and it is also made in the liver. It is important for hormone production and helps provide structure to the cell walls in our body.

Too much cholesterol in the blood can “stick” to blood vessel walls causing them to harden and become blocked. This increases the risk of strokes or heart attacks, and can cause angina.

Medications used for lowering cholesterol are “statins”, “fibrates” and ezetimibe.

- Statins lower cholesterol made in your liver. Statins also stabilise plaques formed by cholesterol and reduce the risk of plaque rupture.
- Fibrates lower the number of circulating triglycerides – another type of fat that comes mostly from the diet.
- Ezetimibe works by decreasing the absorption of cholesterol from food.
  - Ezetimibe can be used alone (if you do not tolerate statins) or in combination with a statin for an additional cholesterol lowering effect.

**It is still important to eat a diet low in fat.**

## **How to take your medicine**

- Rosuvastatin and atorvastatin can be taken at any time of day, but pravastatin and simvastatin are better taken at night.
- Fibrates may be taken once or twice a day as directed.
- Ezetimibe can be taken ONCE a day at any time of the day. It may be taken with or without food. If you are on a statin, you may prefer to take them together.
- Take bezafibrate and gemfibrozil 30 to 60 minutes before food.
- Avoid grapefruit and grapefruit juice while taking statins.

## **Possible side effects of this medicine**

- Most common side effects: headache, abdominal pain, diarrhoea (loose bowel motions), flatulence, feeling tired, muscle aches.
- Allergic-type reactions are possible.
- Please report any side effects to your doctor if they worry you.

## **Digoxin**

Digoxin (Lanoxin)

### **About your medicine**

When the heart is out of rhythm, digoxin helps to slow the heart rate down to make each beat more effective.

This is useful in heart failure when the heart doesn't pump as strongly as it once did.

### **How to take your medicine**

Digoxin should be taken with food to reduce stomach upset. Taking it at about 6pm helps with blood testing, however if you normally take it in the morning then continue to do so.

Antacids, calcium and iron preparations should be avoided for 2 hours either side of taking this medication.

Take with a large glass of water.

### **Possible side effects of this medicine**

The amount of this medicine needed to help most people is close to the

amount that could cause serious side effects. Blood tests should be taken at least once after starting or changing the dose to monitor your treatment.

Watch for early warning signs of too much digoxin, such as those listed below. Check with your doctor if any of the following occur:

- Loss of appetite.
- Unusually slow or uneven pulse.
- Unusual tiredness or weakness.
- Nausea or vomiting, lower stomach pain or irritation.
- Drowsiness or confusion.
- Visual disturbances – such as yellow tinges to the vision.

## **Diuretics**

### **Medications in the group:**

Amiloride; Bendrofluazide; Bumetanide (Burinex); Chlorthalidone (Hygroten); Furosemide (Diurin, Urex-Forte); Metolazone (Zaroxolyn); Spironolactone (Spiractin).

### **Also in combination:**

Amiloride + Furosemide (Frumil); Amiloride + hydrochlorothiazide (Moduretic).

## **About your medicine**

All diuretics work in the kidneys to remove excess salt (sodium) and water from the body. This increases the flow of urine and takes unwanted fluid out of your body tissues. This lowers blood pressure and reduces the workload of the heart.

Diuretics also help to remove fluid that has built up in the body. This will help to reduce symptoms of a “weak heart” e.g. breathlessness (due to excess fluid in the lungs) and swelling (especially of the legs and ankles).

Diuretics may be combined with another medication (such as an ACE inhibitor) to make a tablet with two actions (i.e. cilazapril + hydrochlorothiazide or quinapril + hydrochlorothiazide).

## **How to take your medicine**

Diuretics work quickly and increase the need to pass urine. They should be taken in the morning or early afternoon so you can get rid of your extra fluid during waking hours, so that your night-time sleep is not affected. It is important to take them regularly.

- If you are taking one dose a day, take it in the morning.
- If you are taking more than one dose, take the last dose in the early afternoon.

Bumetanide should be taken 1 hour before or 2 hours after food.

Furosemide should be taken at the same time in relation to food, i.e. always with food or always without food.

Take all medications with a glass of water.

For certain diuretics (furosemide and bumetanide), weigh yourself daily. If your weight increases by more than 2kg you should contact your GP. A rapid gain in weight may indicate a fluid build-up and an increase in your diuretics may be needed.

## **Possible side effects of this medicine**

If side effects are troublesome or continue then check with your doctor:

- Dizziness or light-headedness.
- Stomach upset, diarrhoea, loss of appetite.
- Weakness or tiredness, muscle cramps.
- Rash or increased sensitivity to the sun.
- Changes in hearing or ringing in the ears.
- Increased thirst – let your doctor know if this persists. Chewing gum, sucking ice or low sugar sweets can help to reduce this.

Some diuretics can cause you to lose potassium from your body. Your doctor may want you to take a potassium supplement or to eat/drink foods that contain potassium e.g. bananas, citrus fruit, tomatoes. Your doctor will check your potassium level from time to time.

Diuretics may increase attacks of gout.

## **Flecainide**

### **Medications in the group:**

Flecainide (Tambocor, Tambocor CR)

### **About your medicine**

Flecainide is used to help control irregular or abnormal heart beats, allowing your heart to beat normally.



Flecainide comes in two different formulations, a tablet and a controlled release capsule. It is important that you remain on the same formulation. Your doctor may give you a prescription for this to have as a “pill in pocket” to use acutely in the case of an arrhythmia.

## **How to take your medicine**

If you are taking the tablets (Tambocor), these can be taken with or without food.

If you are taking the controlled release formulation (Tambocor CR), swallow whole and take with food.

Do not change the dose or stop taking this medication without consulting your doctor. Stopping this medication suddenly can make your condition worse.

## **Possible side effects of this medicine**

- Palpitations or chest pain – see your doctor if these are a problem
- Dizziness may be experienced, but it is usually minor and temporary. If this persists, talk to your doctor or pharmacist. If you are affected, do not drive or operate machinery.
- Visual disturbances which may include blurred eyesight or double vision. Do not drive or operate machinery if you are affected.
- Difficulty breathing.
- Headache.
- Nausea.

## **Nitrates**

### **Medications in the group:**

Glyceryl trinitrate patches (Nitroderm); Glyceryl trinitrate spray (GTN, Glytrin, Nitrolingual); Glyceryl Trinitrate Tablets (Lycinate); Isosorbide Mononitrate (Corangin, Duride, ISMO).

## **About your medicine**

Nitrates help to keep the blood vessels supplying the heart as wide as possible so that as much blood and oxygen as possible gets to the heart. They also open up other blood vessels in the body so that the workload of the heart is reduced and it can get by on less oxygen. This helps to prevent or relieve attacks of angina, and improve heart function.

Some nitrates work quickly to relieve chest pain (glyceryl trinitrate e.g. Nitrolingual Spray), while others are used to prevent or reduce attacks of chest pain (Isosorbide mononitrate e.g. Duride).

Nitrates help to make it easier for the heart to pump blood around the body.

## How to take your medicine

GTN should be sprayed under the tongue. Do not shake the bottle, as it causes air bubbles. Each dose is metered; if there are air bubbles present it may change the amount of medication you receive in one spray.

GTN works quickly and should be used at the onset of chest pain. **Sit or lie down. Spray ONE dose under the tongue when you experience chest pain. If the pain continues, have another dose after 5 minutes. If the pain has still not resolved after 2 doses in 10 minutes then call an ambulance by dialling 111 immediately.**

Patches should be applied to clean, dry hairless skin. Rotate the site of application and remember to remove your patch before bedtime.

Isosorbide mononitrate (Duride) tablets slowly release medication over a period of time – take at the same time each day, swallow them whole with water, do not crush or chew them, however they may be halved.

## Possible side effects of this medicine

Most side effects of nitrates occur when you first start taking them or when your dose is increased. They tend to disappear as you continue to take the nitrate.

- Rise slowly from a sitting or lying position as you may get light-headed or dizzy. This occurs often with Nitrolingual Spray. Sit down to take this.
- Headaches that last for a short-time can occur. These headaches become less noticeable after you have been taking nitrate tablets for 1-2 weeks but can occur after taking GTN spray. You can take paracetamol to help relieve the pain, but if headaches are particularly severe or persistent you should contact your doctor.
- Flushing and feeling of warmth can also occur in some people.

# **Perhexiline**

Perhexiline (Pexsig)

## **About your medicine**

Perhexiline increases the efficiency of the heart muscle by reducing its need for oxygen and reducing the potential for damage when there are low oxygen levels.

Perhexiline helps reduce the frequency of moderate to severe angina pain.

## **How to take your medicine**

Can be taken with or without food. Do not stop taking this medicine without consulting your doctor – It is important to keep taking it for as long as it is prescribed as it prevents rather than cures angina.

## **Possible side effects of this medicine**

Most side effects of perhexiline may occur when you first start taking it or when your dose is increased. They may disappear as you continue to take the perhexiline for 2-4 weeks, or when the dose is reduced.

Blood tests will be taken in the first two or three weeks to help monitor your treatment.

- You may experience body or muscle weakness, numbness or tingling, or difficulty walking – let your doctor know if this is the case.
- Nausea, vomiting, loss of appetite and moderate weight loss (2-4 kg) – Let your doctor know if you lose more than 4 kg.
- Headaches, dizziness.
- If you are diabetic, it may cause a decrease in your blood sugar levels- if you experience signs of low blood sugar, be sure to monitor your blood sugar levels more often.

## **Potassium supplements**

### **Medications in the group:**

Potassium Chloride (Duro-K, Span-K, Slow-K); Potassium Chloride + Potassium Carbonate + Potassium Bicarbonate (Chlorvescent).

## **About your medicine**

Potassium is a naturally occurring salt in your body. It is necessary for normal function of all body organs, especially the heart, and to maintain good health.

Sometimes too much potassium is lost from the body. This can occur from illness e.g. diarrhoea and vomiting, or some medicines, i.e. some diuretics. Blood tests are used to detect low potassium levels. If blood levels are low, potassium is usually replaced using supplements.

You may be prescribed potassium supplements to take each day or they may be prescribed for a few days only. Always follow the directions from your doctor exactly. Potassium supplements can be harmful if they haven't been prescribed for you.

Eating potassium rich foods also help to prevent low potassium levels. Examples of such foods include: citrus fruit, tomatoes, bananas, potatoes, kumara, cauliflower, silverbeet, avocados, mushrooms, dried fruits, cocoa, chocolate, and Milo.

## **How to take your medicine**

Duro-K, Span-K and Slow-K tablets slowly release potassium over a period of time and should be swallowed whole with a large glass of water. Chlorvescent is an effervescent tablet and should be dissolved in water before swallowing.

All potassium supplements should be taken with food to avoid stomach upset.

## **Possible side effects of this medicine**

These side effects may occur in some people. If side effects are troublesome or continue then check with your doctor:

- Diarrhoea.
- Stomach pain, burning or discomfort.
- Nausea or vomiting.

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## **Useful contacts and information**

### **Cardiac Rehabilitation Nurses**

Tauranga & Whakatane: (07) 579 8534

Email: [Cardiac.Rehab@bopdhb.govt.nz](mailto:Cardiac.Rehab@bopdhb.govt.nz)

### **New Zealand Heart Foundation**

Tauranga Branch: (07) 575 4787

Reviewed and Updated by Kristen Opie June 2017.

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To be reviewed June 2019.

Please be aware medication brands may occasionally change depending on availability and funding.

*The Bay of Plenty District Health Board has an active commitment to the Treaty of Waitangi  
and the improvement of Māori health.*

Our Values

**CARE**  
Manaakitanga

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