

Taking Medicines for Your Heart



Medicine can be a key tool in managing heart disease. You may need several types. Some medicines can help prevent the blood clots and plaque that cause heart attacks. Others can help control cholesterol, diabetes, fluid balance, irregular heartbeats, stabilize heart rhythms, and high blood pressure.

If you have questions about your medicine, ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist.

Know your medicines

Medicines are prescribed in just the right doses for your heart condition. They work only if you take them exactly as directed. They can have serious consequences if you:

- Take the medicines irregularly or infrequently
- Do not follow the instructions of your healthcare provider about the right time and method to take them.
- Mix them with over-the-counter drugs, alcohol, dietary or herbal supplements, and other prescribed medications without checking with your healthcare provider
- Stop them without first talking with your healthcare provider

Take heart medicines at the same time every day. This will keep the amount of medicine in your bloodstream at a steady level.

Set up a routine

- Tie taking your medications with a daily routine like brushing your teeth or getting ready for bed.
- Some medicines are best taken on an empty stomach. Others are taken with meals.
 - **Caution:** Before choosing mealtime for your routine, check if your medication should be taken on a full or empty stomach.
 - Enquire from your healthcare provider if any foods or drinks can interact with your heart medicines.

A medicine organizer, or pill box, can help you take your pills at the right time each day.

- Some pill containers have sections for multiple doses at different times, such as morning, lunch, evening, and night.
- When using a pill container, refill it at the same time each week. For example, every Sunday morning after breakfast.
- You can set your watch to beep when it's time to take a pill, post a note on the fridge or bathroom mirror, or set up a cell phone app to alert you.
- Keep a "medicine calendar" with your pill bottles and note each time you take a dose.



- When traveling, be certain to bring enough of your medication, plus a few days extra, in case your return is delayed.
- If you're flying, keep your medication in your carry-on bag to avoid lost luggage. Temperatures inside the cargo hold could damage your medication.

Beware of interactions

Vitamins, herbal supplements, and some over-the-counter medicines can be dangerous to take with your heart medicines. Tell your healthcare providers about all products you're taking, even simple remedies for headaches, nausea, vomiting, allergies, colds, gastritis, acidity, or constipation.

Cope with side effects

Some medicines have side effects, such as nausea or headaches. If you have side effects, your healthcare provider may reduce or change your medicine. Never stop taking a medicine or lower your dose on your own. This may cause sudden heart problems. Never try self-medication for any side effects that you are suffering from.

Safety tips

- Don't take a larger dose of a medicine, thinking it will help you more. You may accidentally overdose yourself.
- Fill all your prescriptions at the same pharmacy. This keeps your records in one place.
- Ask your pharmacist or healthcare provider for a fact sheet or other patient information when you start any new medicine.
- Tell your healthcare provider and pharmacist if you have allergies to any medicines.
- Tell your healthcare provider if you are pregnant or breastfeeding.

- Discard all the expired medicines or the ones that your doctor has discontinued. Flushing them down the toilet is not the right way to dispose them. Check with your local pharmacist about the safest way to dispose of your specific medications.
- Don't take medicine in the dark; you might make a mistake. Always turn on the light.
- Order refills a few weeks before you run out.
- Take a supply of pills with you when you travel.
- Store medicines in a cool, dry, dark place that is away from children or pets. The kitchen and the bathroom are bad places to store medicine because of heat and moisture.
- Never share medicines with someone else.
- Give a copy of your medicine list to your spouse or a close friend.
- Keep a list of all the medicines, vitamins, and dietary supplements or herbs you take. Add new medicines to the list when you start taking something new or when a dose changes. Always keep your medicine list up-to-date and a copy with you.

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