

Principles of Drug Treatment for Hypertension

The Medical Officer at the PHC will decide on the drug therapy for the patient. Whether a person requires medicines for his high blood pressure and which medicine is best for the patient would depend on:

- The blood pressure reading.
- Whether the high blood pressure has already affected the heart, kidneys, eyes and blood vessels.
- Existing conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, kidney disease and other risk factors like use of unhealthy dietary habits, lack of physical activity or low physical activity, tobacco, alcohol, overweight and high levels of harmful blood fats.
- Other considerations will be age, sex (male/female) and body weight.

There are several classes of medicines that can be used for the management of hypertension, diabetes and common cancers. Every state has its Essential Drug List (EDL) for common diseases available. The essential drugs for Hypertension, Diabetes and Common Cancers are expected to be available at the PHC, CHC and higher health facilities. This essential drug list is updated on a regular basis and varies state-wise.

Drugs for hypertension are available free of cost to those patients who use government health facilities. The drugs are prescribed by the medical officer and the patient should be given a month's supply of drugs. The patient should be able to collect refills every month from the nearest health facility. This could be a Sub-Centre (SC) or a Primary Health Centre (PHC).

The blood pressure reading should be monitored regularly. The frequency depends on the advice of the medical officer. In some states, ASHA may also be given the digital instruments to measure BP of those who are under treatment to make sure they are taking their medication and their blood pressure is under control.

Heart Attack

A person who has hypertension is at risk for having a heart attack and stroke. These are complications of hypertension.

Heart attack is defined as severe chest pain for more than 30 minutes, radiating to left arm and not relieved by pain killers. It is associated with nausea, vomiting and sweating.

Risk factors of heart attack

- High blood pressure (hypertension).
- High blood glucose level (diabetes).
- Excess alcohol intake.
- Unhealthy foods.
- Smoking.
- Being overweight.

