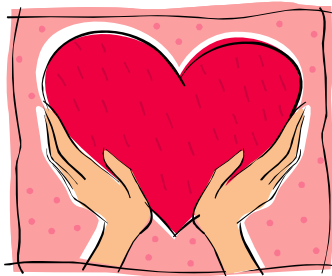


# Living with Heart Failure



## Hospital to Home Medication Management



2<sup>nd</sup> Edition 2007

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*The authors have taken every effort to ensure the content of this booklet is in accord with current recommendations and practice at the time of publication. However, in view of ongoing research and the constant flow of information relating to the treatment of heart failure, all patients should seek regular up to date information from their medical practitioners and relevant health care professionals.*

*The information in this booklet relating to medication use is not comprehensive and further information can be obtained from a medical practitioner or pharmacist.*

*The hospitals, divisions of general practice and governing bodies involved with the production of this booklet will hold no responsibility over any damage that occurs to any person as a result of reading the information provided in this booklet.*

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## Tips on taking your medications

- Carry an updated list of your medications at all times
- Take medications at the same time every day. Ask your pharmacist for the best times.
- Keep taking your medications even if you start to feel better.
- If you forget to take a dose, take the next dose as usual. Do not double-up the dose to 'catch-up'.
- Over the counter medications or natural remedies may affect your heart, or interfere with your medications. Check with your pharmacist before taking any.
- If you have a side effects from your medications tell your doctor, pharmacist, or heart failure nurse. Do not stop taking your medications until your doctor advises you to do so.
- If you have trouble remembering to take your tablets, let your pharmacist know and they will be able to help you.
- Do not share your medications with anyone else or take medications from anyone else.
- Do not leave your medications in the car. Keep them in a cool place away from direct sunlight and out of the reach of children.
- Check labels carefully for expiry dates, your name, the correct medication name and for the right number of tablets.
- If you are unsure how to take your medications, please ask your pharmacist, heart failure nurse or doctor. **DON'T GUESS!**

## **Chemical names, brand names and strengths**

All medications have one chemical name and one or more brand names. For example 'lisinopril' is a chemical name and that has four brand names Zestril, Prinivil, Lisodur and Fibsol.

Your pharmacist may give you a brand that is different to those you have had before. If you are not sure of the medication you have been given, for example the box looks different to usual, ask your pharmacist to explain.

Most medications are available in different strengths. Make sure you check the strength of each medication before you take it.

The main groups of medications are described in detail over the next few pages. Not all of the medications discussed will be suitable for you. The severity of your heart failure, your

symptoms and other medical conditions will determine which types of medications prescribed

## **Side effects**

You are most likely to experience side effects during the first few weeks after starting a new medication, or after an increase in dose. Most side effects should go away as once your body gets used to the medication.





## Angiotensin II Receptor Antagonists

Chemical name	Brand name
Candesartan	ATACAND <sup>®</sup>
Eprosartan	TEVETEN <sup>®</sup>
Irbesartan	AVAPRO <sup>®</sup> , KARVEA <sup>®</sup>
Losartan	COZAAR <sup>®</sup>
Telmisartan	MICARDIS <sup>®</sup> PRITOR <sup>®</sup>

### How do they work?

Angiotensin II receptor antagonists (AII receptor antagonists) widen narrowed blood vessels, making it easier for the heart to pump blood to all parts of the body. They work in a similar way to Angiotensin Converting Enzyme (ACE) inhibitors so you may be prescribed an AII receptor antagonist if you cannot take an ACE inhibitor.

AII antagonists may be used if ACE-inhibitors give you a persistent cough.

### Angiotensin II receptor antagonists help you to:

- ♥ Live longer
- ♥ Reduced time in hospital for heart failure
- ♥ Reduced risk of heart attacks
- ♥ Improve heart failure symptoms







## **Possible side effects of beta-blockers medication**

- Dizziness or light-headedness (symptoms of low blood pressure)
- Persistent cough
- Chest tightness / wheeze
- Tiredness
- Shortness of breath
- Ankle swelling
- Difficulty sleeping / nightmares
- Depression
- Cold hands or feet
- Impotence

You are most likely to experience unwanted effects during the first few weeks after starting your beta-blocker, or after an increase in dose. These unwanted effects should go away as you continue taking your beta-blocker. If unwanted effects are troublesome or do not go away, contact your doctor.

## **Doctor check-ups**

- ✓ Pulse
- ✓ Blood pressure
- ✓ Unwanted effects

**Beta-blockers may take several months to work. Your doctor will need to increase the dose of your beta-blocker gradually for you to get the most benefit from the treatment.**







## Diuretics

There are many diuretics available. The most common is **furosemide**

(**Brand name LASIX<sup>®</sup>, UREX<sup>®</sup>, UREMIDE<sup>®</sup>**).

Some people call diuretics water or fluid tablets.

### **How do diuretics work?**

Diuretics cause you to pass more urine. Removing excess fluid from the body reduces the amount of fluid that builds up in areas such as the lungs, ankles and feet. Removing fluid from the lungs makes breathing easier.

### **When should they be taken?**

Each dose of diuretic will cause you to urinate more frequently during a four hour period. Doses should be taken in the morning or before midday to reduce the need to urinate during the night. If you find that taking your diuretic

at a particular time of the day is inconvenient, talk to your doctor, pharmacist or heart failure nurse.

Fluid building up in the body results in weight gain, which can occur rapidly over a few days. If you put on one or more per day for two day, you should go and **see your general practitioner for advice or call your heart failure nurse.**

### **Benefits of taking diuretics**

- ♥ **Reduced time in hospital for heart failure**
- ♥ **Improved ability to exercise**
- ♥ **Control of fluid retention resulting in improved heart failure symptoms**



## Anti-arrhythmics

Brand name	Chemical name
Amiodarone	<b>Cordarone X<sup>®</sup></b> <b>Aratac<sup>®</sup></b>

### How do anti-arrhythmics work?

Anti-arrhythmic medications are used in people who have a fast or irregular heart rate. If the heart is beating irregularly or too fast it may have trouble pumping blood around the body which in turn can worsen the symptoms of heart failure.

**Amiodarone helps to:**  
**♥ Reduced symptoms from a fast or irregular heartbeat**

It is common to start amiodarone at high doses for a week or two for it to work well. If you start on high doses some symptoms may stop as the dose is reduced.

### Possible side effects of amiodarone

- Persistent headaches
- Dazzling by headlights of cars at night / Impaired vision
- Persistent cough
- Nausea or vomiting / Metallic taste
- Numbness or tingling in fingers or toes
- Rash
- Insomnia (inability to sleep) / Nightmares
- Blue / Greyish colouring of the skin
- Impotence
- Sensitivity to sun

**Tell your doctor if you have any of the above symptoms**









