



# Diuretics



**Examples:** Lasix, Bumex, Ethacrynic acid, Aldactone, Thyazide, Dyazide, HCTZ, Moduretic, Zaroxolyn

**Used To Treat:** High blood pressure, congestive heart failure and edema

**How They Work:** Diuretics work by inhibiting the absorption of sodium and chloride in the loop of Henle or the distal convoluting tubule in the kidney. This ultimately leads to increased urine production. They also cause dilation of the veins and more directly decrease blood pressure. Aldactone inhibits the action of aldosterone, which also increases the salt excretion of the kidney. But, aldactone increases serum potassium in direct contrast to the other diuretics. Triamterene (the other ingredient in dyazide) also acts to increase serum potassium and like aldactone is a potassium sparing diuretic.

**Side Effects:** the most common side effects of diuretics are electrolyte imbalances. Lasix has been associated with hearing loss (rarely). Gout is a rare side effect because uric acid absorption is increased. Calcium excretion is decreased and calcium levels may increase in the blood. The thiazides may increase glucose levels.

### What is High Blood Pressure or Hypertension?

Blood pressure is a measurement of the pressure inside the blood vessel. The pressure is created by the flow of blood. The top number is called systolic pressure and is a direct reflection of the push that the heart muscle creates with each contraction. The lower number is called the diastolic pressure and reflects the pressure in between beats.

A good blood pressure for an adult is a systolic less than 140 and a diastolic pressure less than 80. In general, the lower the pressure the better, unless, of course you are dizzy. The opposite is also true. The higher your blood pressure, the greater your risk for stroke, heart attack, or kidney disease and the greater the work the heart must perform. The rule of thumb is the lower the better.

When blood pressure is high, you might have a headache, feel dizzy, have chest pain, or have problems with vision. More often than not, high blood pressure causes no symptoms, therefore the name... *the silent killer*. Long-term hypertension is a major risk factor for atherosclerosis and all the medical problems that result. It is often inherited but can be made worse by poor lifestyle choices.

It follows that you can improve your blood pressure with weight loss, exercise, low salt diets, and by lowering the stress in your life. Blood pressure naturally goes up with age.