

Beta Blockers



Examples: Metoprolol, Atenolol, Carvedilol, labetalol

Used To Treat: high blood pressure, arrhythmias, angina (chest pain), congestive heart failure

How They Work: Beta-blockers work to decrease blood pressure by decreasing the workload of the heart and blocking that “fight and flight” mechanism that comes with an adrenaline “rush”. There are many types of beta-blockers because the body has many types of beta-receptors. Some beta-blockers are able to facilitate heart muscle repair. In that event, they are used to treat congestive heart failure. They have a myriad of uses including the treatment of migraines, cirrhosis of the liver and portal hypertension, glaucoma, cardiac arrhythmias and generalized anxiety.

Side Effects: These medications slow down the heart rate and may cause fatigue. More rarely they may cause insomnia, or bronchospasm (spasm of the airway). They have also been known to cause impotence. Please, do not stop taking a beta-blocker without speaking with your physician first.

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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.