

TESTING



Health



ACE Inhibitors and ARB's

If you have high blood pressure, heart failure, diabetes, a heart attack or are at high risk for heart disease, your doctor may have prescribed an ACE (angiotensin converting enzyme) inhibitor. ACE inhibitors are medications that widen or dilate your blood vessels to improve the amount of blood your heart pumps and lowers blood pressure. They also increase blood flow, which helps to decrease the amount of work your heart has to do. ARBs (angiotensin receptor blockers) act in the same way but are typically prescribed to people who cannot tolerate the side effects associated with ACE inhibitors.

Diuretics (Water Pills)

Diuretics, commonly known as "water pills" are often used as part of heart disease treatment. Diuretics help your body get rid of unneeded water and salt through the urine. Getting rid of excess fluid makes it easier for your heart to pump and controls your blood pressure. Symptoms of fluid retention may include sudden weight gain, swollen ankles, and/or shortness of breath.

Digoxin

Digoxin is used in combination with other medications to treat heart failure and also a certain type of irregular heartbeat (chronic atrial fibrillation). Digoxin belongs to a class of medications called cardiac glycosides. It works by affecting certain minerals (sodium and potassium) inside heart cells. This reduces strain on the heart and helps it maintain a normal, steady and strong heartbeat.

Diet Modifications

An ACE inhibitor can interact with some foods and drugs. While taking an ACE inhibitor, do not use salt substitutes. These substitutes contain potassium and ACE inhibitor medications cause the body to retain potassium. Learn how to read food labels to choose low-salt and low potassium foods. Your doctor might also recommend a diuretic to help reduce fluid retention. Treatment guidelines for heart failure management encourage patients taking diuretics to eat a low salt diet.

Over the counter non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications (NSAIDs, like Aleve and Motrin) and aspirin may cause the body to retain salt and which reduces the effectiveness of an ACE inhibitor. Check with your doctor before taking any anti-inflammatory medications.

If taking Digoxin, your body may not absorb the drug as well if you also eat foods that are high in fiber or if you take certain medications. Ask your doctor or pharmacist for details on how to take this medication.

Testing

When taking ACE Inhibitors, ARB's or Diuretics, You should have a blood test to check your potassium level and have your kidney function checked 1-2 wks after starting heart medication, anytime your doses are changed and at least annually thereafter. It is also important to check your BP regularly.

Long-term Use

Never stop taking an ACE inhibitor, even if you feel that it is not working. If you are taking ACE inhibitors for heart failure, your heart failure symptoms may not improve right away. However, long-term use of ACE inhibitors helps manage chronic heart failure and reduces the risk that your condition will become worse. ACE inhibitors, ARB's, Diuretics and/or Digoxin combined with diet modifications are vital to preserve heart function and slow disease progression.