

What do heart medications do?

Taking your medication as prescribed is key. This will help reduce the chance that you will have another heart event. You may be taking four or more new medications. They are all important because they work in different ways in your body:

- Prevent blood clots forming
- Lower your blood pressure
- Improve blood flow to your heart
- Relieve angina symptoms
- Lower your LDL (bad) cholesterol
- Raise your HDL (good) cholesterol

It is important to take all of your medications.

Do 'blood pressure' medications do more than just control my blood pressure?

Yes, they lower blood pressure. The blood vessels relax. This increases the amount of blood the heart pumps. The medications can prevent further damage to the heart. They can also help strengthen the heart's pump for those with heart failure. Patients must take the medications regularly to work.

What is a beta-blocker and why do I have to take it?

A beta-blocker works by lowering your pulse and blood pressure. Beta-blocker drug names all end with the letters 'lol'. Some common names are:

- Atenolol (Tenormin®)
- Bisoprolol (Monacor®)
- Metoprolol (Lopressor®, Betaloc®, Toprol XL®)
- Carvedilol (Coreg®).

If you've had a heart attack, beta-blockers help reduce the chance of another heart attack. They can also help reduce chest pains known as angina. They may cause you to feel tired, dizzy and impotent. It is very important that you don't stop these medications on your own. You must talk to your doctor or nurse practitioner first. Suddenly stopping them could increase your blood pressure and trigger symptoms. You could even have a heart attack.

Do cholesterol medications cause muscle pain?

Less than 0.1% of people have muscle aches from taking these medications. Please talk to you doctor or nurse practitioner before stopping them. One family of cholesterol medications are called 'statins'. They work to lower 'bad' cholesterol (LDL, triglycerides) and increase 'good' cholesterol (HDL).

Why are there different types of 'blood thinners'?

Blood thinners called anti-coagulants and anti-platelets work in different ways. They prevent harmful clots from forming in your heart. Some common names are:

- Acetylsalicylic acid, ASA (Aspirin)
- Clopidogrel (Plavix®)
- Ticagrelor (Brilinta®)
- Prasugrel (Effient®), Warfarin (Coumadin®)
- Dabigatran (Pradaxa®)
- Rivaroxaban (Xarelto®)
- Endoxaban (Lixiana®)
- Apixaban (Eliquis®).

People with artificial heart valves or atrial fibrillation are prescribed these medications. The medications prevent heart attacks and lower the risk of stroke.

Why am I taking more than one 'blood thinner?'

Blood tends to clot more often when it is in contact with metals from a stent or some valves. Take all your 'blood thinner' medications as prescribed. This is key if you have a stent implanted in your coronary artery or a mechanical heart valve replaced in your heart. Some of these medications are expensive. Contact your doctor or nurse practitioner to find funding to support the costs.

For more information: smgh.ca/patient-care-programs/regional-cardiac-care-centre/cardiac-rehabilitation/