

Heart Failure: Medicines to Help Your Heart



You have a condition called heart failure (also known as congestive heart failure, or CHF). Your doctor will likely prescribe medicines for heart failure and any underlying health problems you have. Most heart failure patients take one or more types of medicines. Your healthcare provider will work to find the combination of medicines that works best for you.

Heart failure medicines

Here are the most common heart failure medicines:

- **ACE inhibitors** lower blood pressure and decrease strain on the heart. This makes it easier for the heart to pump. **Angiotensin receptor blockers** have similar effects. These are prescribed for some patients instead of ACE inhibitors.
- **Beta-blockers** relieve stress on the heart. They also improve symptoms. They may also improve the heart's pumping action over time.
- **Diuretics** (also called "water pills") help rid your body of excess water. This can help rid your body of swelling (edema). Having less fluid to pump means your heart doesn't have to work as hard. Some diuretics make your body lose a mineral called potassium. Your doctor will tell you if you need to take supplements or eat more foods high in potassium.
- **Digoxin** helps your heart pump with more strength. This helps your heart pump more blood with each beat. So, more oxygen-rich blood travels to the rest of the body.
- **Aldosterone antagonists** help alter hormones and decrease strain on the heart.
- **Hydralazine** and **nitrates** are two separate medicines used together to treat heart failure. They may come in one "combination" pill. They lower blood pressure and decrease how hard the heart has to pump.

Medicines for related conditions

Controlling other heart problems helps keep heart failure under control, too. Depending on other heart problems you have, medicines may be prescribed to:

- Lower blood pressure (antihypertensives).
- Lower cholesterol levels (statins).
- Prevent blood clots (anticoagulants or aspirin).
- Keep the heartbeat steady (antiarrhythmics).

