

Cardiac Medications At-A-Glance

1) Anticoagulants (Also known as Blood Thinners.)

Commonly prescribed include:

- Dalteparin (Fragmin), Danaparoid (Orgaran)
- Enoxaparin (Lovenox)
- Heparin (various)
- Tinzaparin (Innohep)
- Warfarin (Coumadin)

What the Medication Does:

Decreases the clotting (coagulating) ability of the blood. Sometimes called blood thinners, although they do not actually thin the blood. They do NOT dissolve existing blood clots. Used to treat certain blood vessel, heart and lung conditions.

Reason for Medication:

- Helps to prevent harmful clots from forming in the blood vessels.
- May prevent the clots from becoming larger and causing more serious problems.
- Often prescribed to prevent first or recurrent stroke.

2) Antiplatelet Agents

Commonly prescribed include:

- Aspirin
- Ticlopidine
- Clopidogrel (Plavix®)
- Dipyridamole

What the Medication Does:

Keeps blood clots from forming by preventing blood platelets from sticking together.

Reason for Medication:

- Helps prevent clotting in patients who have had a heart attack, unstable angina, ischemic strokes, TIA (transient ischemic attacks, or "little strokes") and other forms of cardiovascular disease.
- Usually prescribed preventively when plaque buildup is evident but there is not yet a large obstruction in the artery.

3) Angiotensin-Converting Enzyme (ACE) Inhibitors

Commonly prescribed include:

- Benazepril (Lotensin)
- Captopril (Capoten)
- Enalapril (Vasotec)
- Fosinopril (Monopril)
- Lisinopril (Prinivil, Zestril)
- Moexipril (Univasc)
- Perindopril (Aceon)
- Quinapril (Accupril)
- Ramipril (Altace)
- Trandolapril (Mavik)

What the Medication Does:

Expands blood vessels and decreases resistance by lowering levels of angiotensin II. Allows blood to flow more easily and makes the heart's work easier or more efficient.

Reason for Medication:

Used to treat or improve symptoms of cardiovascular conditions including high blood pressure and heart failure.

4) Angiotensin II Receptor Blockers (or Inhibitors)

(Also known as ARBs, Angiotensin-2 Receptor Antagonists and AT-2)

Commonly prescribed include:

- Candesartan (Atacand)
- Eprosartan (Teveten)
- Irbesartan (Avapro)
- Losartan (Cozaar)
- Telmisartan (Micardis)
- Valsartan (Diovan)

What the Medication Does:

Rather than lowering levels of angiotensin II (as ACE inhibitors do) angiotensin II receptor blockers prevent this chemical from having any effects on the heart and blood vessels. This keeps blood pressure from rising.

Reason for Medication:

Used to treat or improve symptoms of cardiovascular conditions including high blood pressure and heart failure.

5) Beta Blockers (Also known as Beta-Adrenergic Blocking Agents)

Commonly prescribed include:

- Acebutolol (Sectral)
- Atenolol (Tenormin)
- Betaxolol (Kerlone)
- Bisoprolol/hydrochlorothiazide (Ziac)
- Bisoprolol (Zebeta)
- Carteolol (Cartrol)
- Metoprolol (Lopressor, Toprol XL)
- Nadolol (Corgard)
- Propranolol (Inderal)
- Sotalol (Betapace)
- Timolol (Blocadren)

What the Medication Does:

Decreases the heart rate and cardiac output, which lowers blood pressure and makes the heart beat more slowly and with less force.

Reason for Medication:

- Used to lower blood pressure.
- Used with therapy for cardiac arrhythmias (abnormal heart rhythms) and in treating chest pain (angina).
- Used to prevent future heart attacks in patients who have had a heart attack.

6) Calcium Channel Blockers (Also known as Calcium Antagonists or Calcium Blockers)

Commonly prescribed include:

- Amlodipine (Norvasc, Lotrel)
- Bepridil (Vascor)
- Diltiazem (Cardizem, Tiazac)
- Felodipine (Plendil)
- Nifedipine (Adalat, Procardia)
- Nimodipine (Nimotop)
- Nisoldipine (Sular)
- Verapamil (Calan, Isoptin, Verelan)

What the Medication Does:

Interrupts the movement of calcium into the cells of the heart and blood vessels. May decrease the heart's pumping strength and relax blood vessels.

Reason for Medication:

Used to treat high blood pressure, chest pain (angina) caused by reduced blood supply to the heart muscle and some arrhythmias (abnormal heart rhythms).

7) Cholesterol-lowering medications

Commonly prescribed include:

- statins
- resins
- nicotinic acid (niacin)
- gemfibrozil
- clofibrate

What the Medication Does:

Various medications can lower blood cholesterol levels. They may be prescribed individually or in combination with other drugs. They work in the body in different ways. Some affect the liver, some work in the intestines and some interrupt the formation of cholesterol from circulating in the blood.

Reason for Medication:

Used to lower LDL ("bad") cholesterol, raise HDL ("good") cholesterol and lower triglyceride levels.

8) Digitalis Preparations

Commonly prescribed include:

- Lanoxin (Digoxin, Digitoxin)

What the Medication Does:

Increases the force of the heart's contractions, which can be beneficial in heart failure and for irregular heartbeats.

Reason for Medication:

- Used to relieve heart failure symptoms, especially when the patient isn't responding to ACE inhibitors and diuretics.
- Also slows certain types of irregular heartbeat (arrhythmias), particularly atrial fibrillation.

9) Diuretics (Also known as Water Pills)

Commonly prescribed include:

- Amiloride (Midamor)
- Bumetanide (Bumex)

- Chlorothiazide (Diuril)
- Chlorthalidone (Hygroton)
- Furosemide (Lasix)
- Hydro-chlorothiazide (Esidrix, Hydrodiuril)
- Indapamide (Lozol)
- Spironolactone (Aldactone)

What the Medication Does:

Causes the body to rid itself of excess fluids and sodium through urination. Helps to relieve the heart's workload. Also decreases the buildup of fluid in the lungs and other parts of the body, such as the ankles and legs. Different diuretics remove fluid at varied rates and through different methods.

Reason for Medication:

Used to help lower blood pressure.

Used to help reduce swelling (edema) from excess buildup of fluid in the body.

10) Vasodilators (Also known as Nitrates. Nitroglycerin tablets are a form of vasodilator.)

Commonly prescribed include:

- Isosorbide dinitrate (Isordil)
- Nesiritide (Natrecor)
- Hydralazine (Apresoline)
- Nitrates
- Minoxidil

What the Medication Does

Relaxes blood vessels and increases the supply of blood and oxygen to the heart while reducing its workload. Can come in pills to be swallowed, chewable tablets and as a topical application (cream).

Reason for Medication

Used to ease chest pain (angina).