

Tips for starting an SGLT2 inhibitor to treat your heart failure

If you're prescribed an SGLT2 inhibitor, make sure you understand why it's being recommended.

If you do your own research, you may read that SGLT2 inhibitors are diabetes medications. Although they were first developed to treat type 2 diabetes, they are valuable heart medications too. Research has shown that they also have big benefits for heart failure and kidney disease.

When starting an SGLT2 inhibitor, make sure to:



There are many names for SGLT2 inhibitors. Examples of those used for heart failure care:

- dapagliflozin (Farxiga)
- empagliflozin (Jardiance)

More are being studied.



- Review all of your medical conditions**, including problems with your liver, bladder, or pancreas. Let your health care team know if you could be or plan to become pregnant.



- Carefully read the medication guide or information insert** that comes with your prescription.



- Talk with your care team, including your pharmacist, if you have questions** or are still unsure about:
 - Why an SGLT2 inhibitor is being recommended
 - How and when to take it
 - Occasions when you may need to stop this and other medications for a short period of time (for example, before a colonoscopy, surgery or other procedure)



- Ask about any side effects to watch for** and steps you can take to prevent them. In general, serious side effects are rare.
 - It's an uncomfortable topic, but make sure you know how to be clean and prevent genital yeast and other infections (those of the penis or vagina).
 - Because this medicine makes you urinate more often and many people with heart failure are already taking a diuretic (water pill), be sure to talk about how to stay hydrated (drink enough water without drinking too much).



- Keep up with your heart-healthy routine.**
 - Take your other heart medications, as prescribed. (Use the summary sheet on Page 3 to review your medications.)
 - Make heart-healthy lifestyle choices (for example, be active, eat heart-healthy foods, don't smoke, get enough sleep, lower stress).
 - Pay attention to and manage other risk factors that make heart disease or stroke more likely (for example, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, and diabetes).



Schedule and keep all health visits with your care providers, and get blood work or other lab tests done.

- The test results can give you and your care team important information to make sure:
 - » You're on the right combination of heart medications and the amount (dose) you are taking is OK.
 - » Your medications are working as intended.



Call your doctor or care team if you have any issues or concerns. For example,

- If you are having side effects from the medicine
- New or worsening symptoms of heart failure or low blood sugar
- If you're having difficulty paying for your medicines



Remember to tell your other doctors and care teams, including your primary care provider, that you've started on an SGLT2 inhibitor and why.

- If you have type 2 diabetes and take insulin or other diabetes medications, it's a good idea to make sure your diabetes and heart care teams are aware in case your medications need to be adjusted.



Be your own best advocate

- It can take time for some insurance companies to approve and add medications to their preferred drug list (called a formulary). Most health plans will have at least one SGLT2 inhibitor on the list.
- If you are having trouble paying for your medications, talk with your care team. You may be able to apply for a drug savings card or financial assistance programs.

Write down other questions you have or anything else you'd like to talk about:

Heart failure medications	Common examples listed by the generic followed by (brand) name	Which one I'm taking (add a ✓)	Dose and how often (for example, 1 pill in the morning)	Other notes/how each helps
Beta blocker*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • carvedilol (Coreg) • metoprolol succinate (Toprol) • bisoprolol (Zebeta) 			
Diuretic (water pill), as needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • furosemide (Lasix) • bumetanide (Bumex) • torsemide (Demadex) 			
Hydralazine and isosorbide dinitrate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • hydralazine • isosorbide dinitrate 			
Sinoatrial node inhibitor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ivabradine (Corlanor) 			
Others:				

*If you have heart failure with reduced ejection fraction or pumping ability, these four types of medications are considered the foundation for helping you feel better and live longer.

In addition to your medications, remember to:

- Report any new or worsening symptoms (for example, signs of swelling, more shortness of breath, weakness)
- Weigh yourself daily
- Focus on a healthy lifestyle

For more information and tools to help manage heart failure, visit [CardioSmart.org/HeartFailure](https://www.heart.org/heartfailure).