Heart Failure: Medicines to Avoid

Some medicines can help heart failure. But others can make it worse. That is why it is important to always ask your doctor before you take any new medicine. It's also important to read medicine labels. This includes everything you take without a prescription.

As a rule, don't take medicine that speeds up your heart or has sodium in it.

Over-the-counter medicines
You may need to avoid:

• Medicines with sodium. Examples include some antacids and laxatives.

• Medicines or herbs with pseudoephedrine. An example is Sudafed.

• Medicines or herbs with ephedrine. Two examples are ma huang and Herbalife.

• Medicines or herbs with oxymetazoline. These include nasal sprays. Two examples are Afrin and Dristan.

• Pain medicines called NSAIDs. These include ibuprofen, such as Advil or Motrin. And they include naproxen, such as Aleve.

• Aspirin. If your doctor has told you to take a low-dose aspirin every day, it's probably okay to take it. But more aspirin may make your heart failure worse. So don't use aspirin for pain. It's better to use acetaminophen, such as Tylenol.

Prescription medicines
Make sure every doctor knows that you have heart failure. And talk to your primary care doctor or heart specialist before you take:

• Calcium channel blockers. Examples are diltiazem and verapamil. These treat high blood pressure. They also treat some types of heart disease.

• Antiarrhythmics. One example is amiodarone. These treat a fast or uneven heartbeat.

• Pain relievers. These include celecoxib and ketoprofen.

• Antibiotics.

• Some diabetes medicines.

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