Heart Problems: Beta-Blockers

Beta-blocker medicines relax blood vessels and slow your heart rate. They lower the workload on the heart.

Who should take beta-blockers?
Your doctor may prescribe them to:

• Slow the progress of heart failure.
• Lower blood pressure.
• Prevent a second heart attack.
• Slow your heart rate if you have heart rhythm problems.

Precautions
Your doctor will decide if a beta-blocker is right for you. It will depend on your overall health and what other medicines you take.

Your doctor may talk to you about these precautions:

• Breathing problems. Beta-blockers can make wheezing worse or may make you short of breath. Talk to your doctor about this, especially if you have asthma.

• Allergies. Beta-blockers may cause allergic reactions to be worse and harder to treat.

Side effects
Ask your pharmacist about the side effects of each medicine you take. Side effects are also listed in the information that comes with your medicine.

Common side effects of these medicines include:

• Feeling dizzy or lightheaded.
• Feeling tired.
• Trouble sleeping.

Call your doctor if you think you are having a problem with your medicine.

Call 911 right away if you think you are having a serious reaction, such as trouble breathing.
Talk to your doctors
Make sure every doctor you see knows about all of the medicines, vitamins, or herbal supplements you take. This means anything you take with or without a prescription.

Tell each doctor about all medical problems you have and what kind of treatment you are getting. Ask if any of the problems you have or medicines you take will cause a problem with your beta-blockers.

Ask what side effects you need to look for and when to call a doctor.

If you plan to stop your medicine, talk with your doctor first about how to do it safely. Your doctor may want you to slowly decrease your dose.

Do you have any questions or concerns after reading this information? It's a good idea to write them down and take them to your next doctor visit.