

Discharge Instructions: Taking Blood Pressure Medications

You have been diagnosed with high blood pressure (hypertension). Diet and exercise help control high blood pressure. Many people also need the help of one or more medications. Here are the main types of blood pressure drugs and how they work.

Diuretics

Diuretics are sometimes called "water pills" because they work in the kidney and flush excess water and sodium (salt) from the body.

Beta-blockers

Beta-blockers reduce nerve impulses to the heart and blood vessels. This makes the heart beat slower and with less force. Your blood pressure drops, and your heart does not have to work as hard.

ACE inhibitors

ACE inhibitors cause the vessels to relax. This helps the blood flow better and lowers blood pressure.

Angiotensin antagonists

Angiotensin antagonists shield blood vessels from a hormone that causes the blood vessels to get stiff and narrow. Your vessels become wider, and your blood pressure goes down.

Calcium channel blockers (CCBs)

CCBs keep calcium from entering the muscle cells of the heart and blood vessels. This causes blood vessels to relax, and your blood pressure goes down.

Alpha-blockers

Alpha-blockers reduce nerve impulses to blood vessels. This allows blood to pass easily, causing blood pressure to go down.

Alpha-beta blockers

Alpha-beta blockers work the same way as alpha-blockers but also slow your heartbeat. As a result, less blood is pumped through your blood vessels and your blood pressure goes down.

Vasodilators

Vasodilators directly open blood vessels by relaxing the muscle in the vessel walls, causing blood

pressure to go down.