

Living Longer with Heart Failure: Beta-Blockers

My Beta-Blocker is: _____

What Are Beta-Blockers?

Beta-blockers help a weak heart work better and longer. They also help the heart rhythm problems that are common in heart failure. Several large medical research studies show that beta-blockers can help you to live longer if you have heart failure.

Beta-blockers work well if the main chamber of your heart is not pumping enough blood with each beat. They are also helpful if your blood pumps normally, but you have heart failure caused by a heart that is stiff and thick.

What Are the Side Effects?

Beta-blockers may make you feel slightly worse for the first few weeks after you start taking the medication. These side effects usually go away. They include:

- Shortness of breath
- Tiredness
- Weight gain
- Slow pulse
- Lower blood pressure
- Dizziness
- Worsened asthma (AZ muh)

Why Should You Work with Your Doctor?

It is always important to let your doctor know if you are having side effects. Your doctor can try another beta-blocker or change the amount you are taking to reduce the side effects.

**Why Should You
Work with Your
Doctor?
*continued***

For instance, you can weigh yourself every day and tell your doctor if you gain more than a few pounds. Your doctor may tell you to increase the amount of water pill you are taking as your body adjusts to the beta-blocker.

If side effects continue and the beta-blocker needs to be stopped, work closely with your doctor. Stopping it too quickly can cause serious problems with your blood pressure and heart rhythm.

Let your doctor know if anything keeps you from taking your beta-blocker. Never stop taking a beta-blocker without first talking to your doctor.

**How Is the Proper
Dosage
Determined?**

To reduce the chance of side effects, your doctor will probably give you a very low dose of the beta-blocker at first, and then slowly increase it over several months until it is right for you.

Beta-blockers can help improve your health. It is very important to use these drugs even if there is a small chance of side effects. Work with your doctor to get on the right dose of your beta-blocker, and take it as directed.

Glossary

Term	Pronunciation	Definition
Asthma	AZ muh	A medical condition that makes breathing difficult by causing the air passages to become narrow or blocked