

## Discharge Medications Commonly Prescribed for Heart Patients

There are some classes of medication that have been proven to reduce cardiovascular events and death in patients with a history of NSTEMI-ACS, commonly known as a heart attack.

It is recommended that patients with NSTEMI-ACS be treated with these medications unless contraindications exist or treatment is not tolerated.

Your medications and dosage will be individualized, depending on other medical issues and your risk of side effects.

The benefits of combination medical therapy are long term with regards to the reduction of risk of repeat Myocardial Infarction (heart attack), stroke, re-hospitalization, need for revascularization (opening your artery with a balloon and or stent), and death.

Because you have been diagnosed with heart disease, you remain at life-long risk, so you will need to take these medications for the rest of your life, unless your physician tells you otherwise.



### The 5 classes of medications that are likely to be prescribed to you are listed in this booklet.

- Do not stop taking any medications without first consulting your doctor. Stopping medications suddenly may be dangerous to your health.
- Ask your pharmacist about interactions your prescription medications may have with over-the-counter medications.
- Do not compare your dosages to those of your friends. Your medication doses are individualized to provide the best treatment for your condition(s).
- Always take the amount ordered by your doctor. Do not adjust your medications without first contacting your doctor.

## Aspirin

- You doctor will determine the amount of time you will take aspirin.
- You may be required to take aspirin for the rest of your life.
- Do not take aspirin with alcohol.
- Limit use of caffeine when taking aspirin.
- One buffered aspirin contains 553 mg of sodium – consider when on a low sodium diet.
- To reduce GI symptoms, take with food, milk, antacid or large glass of water.
- Do not crush or chew sustained-release or enteric-coated aspirin.
- Use a soft-bristle tooth brush to avoid nicking your gums.
- Report stomach pain or burning to your doctor.
- Report bloody or dark stools, bleeding gums or red pin prick spots to your doctor.

## P2Y12 (Antiplatelet) Medications

**Examples: Plavix-Clopidogrel, Effient-Prasugrel, Brilinta-Ticagrelor, Ticlid-Ticlopidine and others**

- These medications keep your platelets from forming clots inside your arteries and veins.
- Take as directed.
- The amount of time you will take this medication is determined by your doctor.
- Do not stop this medication without instruction from your doctor.
- While taking this medication, a scrape or cut may take longer than usual to stop bleeding.
- Notify your doctor if unusual bleeding or bruising occur.
- Make sure your doctor or dentist knows you are taking these medications before you have a procedure.
- Notify your doctor if you notice any black or bloody stools.

## Beta Blockers

**Examples: Toprol-Metoprolol, Atenolol-Tenormin, Carvedilol-Coreg and others**

- Beta blockers help control your heart rate and your blood pressure.
- The amount of time you will take this medication is determined by your doctor.
- Do not stop this medication without instruction from your doctor.
- Take with food.
- It is very dangerous to stop this medication suddenly. Sudden discontinuance of this medication may cause chest pain or heart attack DO NOT stop this medication without your doctor's direction.
- Notify your doctor if your blood pressure is too low or your heart rate is too slow.
- May mask symptoms of hypoglycemia (low blood sugar) if you are a diabetic.

## ACE Inhibitors/ARBs

**Examples: Captopril. Vasotec-Enalapril, Altace-Ramipril, Lisinopril, Lotensin-Benazepril and others**

- ACE inhibitors are used for blood pressure control and help your heart beat stronger.
- The amount of time you will take this medication is determined by your doctor,
- Do not stop this medication without instruction from your doctor,
- Light-headedness may occur, especially during the first few days of administration. If you faint, call the doctor immediately. After a few days the light-headedness should disappear. If it does not, call your doctor.
- Call the doctor if you develop a dry, hacky, non-productive cough.
- Do not use salt substitutes containing potassium without consulting your doctor.
- NSAIDS (ex. Advil) decrease the effectiveness of ACE inhibitors.

## Statins

**Examples: Lipitor-Atorvastatin, Lescol-Fluvastatin, Mevacor-Lovastatin, Pravachol-Pravastatin, Crestor-Rosuvastatin, Zocor-Simvastatin and others**

- Help lower your bad cholesterol and increase your good cholesterol.
- The amount of time you will take this medication is determined by your doctor.
- Do not stop this medication without instruction from your doctor.
- The drug is most effective when taken in the evening.
- Taking this medication does not decrease the importance of properly managing your diet, exercising, controlling your weight and stopping smoking.
- Do not take St. John's Wart or Red Yeast Rice when taking statin medications.
- Grapefruit juice: Greater than a quart a day may increase drug levels, so the use of grapefruit juice is discouraged.
- Do not drink alcohol when taking statin medications.
- Rare incidences of memory loss or confusion have occurred with statin use. These events were generally not serious and were resolved when the drug was discontinued.
- Statins may increase blood sugar levels, but the benefits of the drug have been proven to outweigh the slight increase in risk.
- Report to your physician immediately unexplained muscle pain, tenderness, weakness, especially accompanied with fever, loss of appetite, upper abdominal pain, dark-colored urine, or yellowing of the skin or eyes.

## Nitroglycerin

**Examples: NitroSTAT, Nitrobid**

- Helps with chest pain, by relaxing the blood vessels so your heart does not have to work so hard to pump
- Take the medication as directed by your doctor
- Carry nitroglycerin with you at all times.
- Nitroglycerin should be stored in a cool dark place in a tightly closed container. Remove the cotton from the container because cotton can absorb the medication.
- Store in the original container or a container specific for nitroglycerin. Carry the container in a jacket pocket or purse, not in a pocket close to your body.
- Do not chew, crush, or swallow the pills. Let them melt under your tongue
- If you do not feel burning or tingling under your tongue when taking the medication, replace the medication.
- Headaches may occur after you take this medication.
- Sit down when you take the medication. The medication may lower your blood pressure or cause you to feel dizzy. If you are driving pull off the road before taking the medication.
- Notify your doctor, and do not take nitroglycerin, if you are currently taking any of the following medications:
  - ◊ sildenafil (Viagra, Revatio)
  - ◊ vardenafil (Levitra, Staxyn)
  - ◊ tadalafil (Cialis, Adcirca)
  - ◊ avanafil (Stendra)



# Heart Disease and Medication Safety

Some medications may interfere with certain medications you have been prescribed for your heart condition. These medications may:

- Increase your blood pressure and heart rate, putting extra stress on your heart.
- Interact with your heart medications, causing your heart medication not to work properly.

## Nonsteroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs)

- Can be both prescription and over-the-counter.
- Used to relieve pain or reduce inflammation from conditions such as arthritis.
- Can cause your body to retain fluid and decrease the function of your kidneys, which may cause your blood pressure to rise. An increased blood pressure puts an extra burden on the heart.
- Check the labels of other over-the-counter medications for NSAIDs.
- Ask your doctor if it is OK for you to use NSAIDs
- He may recommend an alternative such as Acetaminophen (Tylenol).

### Examples of NSAIDs:

- Aspirin is commonly prescribed by your doctor as a precaution for heart attack and stroke. Only take as directed by your doctor.
- Ibuprofen.
- Naproxen.

## Migraine Head Ache Medication

- Some migraine medications work by tightening blood vessels in your head. This relieves the pain, but it constricts the blood vessels throughout your body.
- Constriction of blood vessels caused by migraine medications can cause your blood pressure to rise, sometimes to a dangerous level.
- Talk to your doctor before taking any medication for migraines.

## Weight Loss Medicines

- May do more harm than good.
- May make heart disease worse.
- Elevate your blood pressure.
- Increase your heart rate.
- Put stress on your heart.
- Have negative effects on your heart valves.
- Whether prescription or over-the-counter, check with your doctor before taking any weight loss medicine.

## Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT)

- Estrogen and progestin or estrogen alone hormone therapy is not recommended as a method to decrease the risk of a 2nd heart attack in postmenopausal women.
- If you are taking hormone replacement medication prior to your heart event, speak with your doctor about the associated risks and benefits before resuming this medicine.

### MORE TIPS for Safe Medication Administration

- Give a list of ALL the medications you use, both prescription and over-the-counter, to every doctor you visit, at every visit. DON'T assume they know all the medications you are taking.
- Read medication labels before buying over-the-counter medication. Make sure the medication doesn't contain ingredients that could make your heart disease worse, such as NSAIDs or decongestants. Ask the pharmacist if you are not sure.
- Talk to your doctor before using any over-the-counter medication, herbal preparation, vitamins, or other nutritional supplements. Ask for alternative to potentially harmful medications.