

Heart Failure: Aldosterone Receptor Antagonists



Aldosterone receptor antagonists are a type of medicine used to treat heart failure. Taking these medicines can reduce your symptoms and help you feel better.

Studies show that these medicines can help people with advanced heart failure live longer and stay out of the hospital.

These medicines are a type of diuretic, or "water pill." They help your body get rid of extra fluid but hold on to potassium. Because of this, they may be called potassium-sparing diuretics.

Examples

- Eplerenone
- Spironolactone

How do they work?

Aldosterone receptor antagonists help your body get rid of extra water without losing potassium. Other types of diuretics cause you to lose potassium.

These medicines can reduce swelling and lower blood pressure. They also can keep heart failure from getting worse.

Why are they used?

Aldosterone receptor antagonists may be a good choice if you have severe heart failure and you are already taking other medicines for your heart failure.

Sometimes people take these medicines with other types of diuretics. They may also be combined with other heart medicines, such as an ACE inhibitor.

How well do they work?

These medicines can help you live longer with heart failure and make it less likely that you will need to be in the hospital.

Getting rid of extra fluid can reduce swelling in your legs, help you breathe better, and lower your blood pressure. It can also reduce your risk of problems caused by high blood pressure.

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:

- Nausea and vomiting.
- Stomach cramps.
- Diarrhea.

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.

What to think about

- Most people start these medicines at a very low dose and then increase them over time.

- You may need regular blood tests to check your potassium levels. This diuretic does not make your body lose potassium like some other diuretics do. So you do not need to get extra potassium in your diet. Do not use salt substitutes that contain potassium.
- You may feel more tired or need to urinate more often when you start to take this medicine. These effects tend to occur less after you have taken the medicine for a while. If the increase in urine gets in the way of your sleep or daily activities, ask your doctor to help you plan a schedule for taking the medicine.