

Heart Failure: ARBs



Angiotensin II receptor blockers (ARBs) help improve blood flow and lower blood pressure. This may make it easier for your heart to work.

Examples

- Candesartan
- Eprosartan
- Irbesartan
- Losartan
- Olmesartan
- Valsartan

Some of these medicines may be combined with a diuretic ("water pill"). This is a pill that helps your body get rid of extra water. Putting these medicines together in one pill makes it easier to take and gives you the benefit of both drugs. Talk to your doctor to see if this combination may be right for you.

How do ARBs work?

ARBs block the action of chemicals in the body that narrow blood vessels. These medicines cause blood vessels to widen and relax. This makes it easier for blood to flow, and it lowers

blood pressure. It also reduces the backup of blood in the heart and lungs.

These medicines help your body release water and salt (sodium). This also lowers blood pressure.

Why are these medicines used to treat heart failure?

ARBs may be used by people who cannot take ACE inhibitor medicines. ACE inhibitors can cause an annoying cough. This may be hard for some people to live with. So doctors may prescribe an ARB instead.

Who should not take an ARB?

Do **NOT** take an ARB if:

- You had a bad reaction when you took an ARB before.
- You have certain kidney problems. Talk with your doctor about this.
- You are pregnant.

How well do these medicines work?

ARBs can lower the risk of death from heart failure. ARBs also reduce the number of people with heart failure who need to go into the hospital. ARBs have been shown to work as well as ACE inhibitors for heart failure.

Side effects

Low blood pressure is the most common side effect. It can make you feel dizzy or like you might faint, especially when you stand up. To keep this from happening, get up slowly when you are sitting or lying down.

If you are taking other medicines, talk with your doctor before you take an ARB. This includes medicines you can buy without a prescription, vitamins, herbs, and other supplements. ARBs

can react with other medicines, such as nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs). NSAIDs are medicines that reduce swelling, such as ibuprofen, naproxen, and aspirin. ARBs may also react with antacids, potassium supplements, some diuretics, and lithium.

What to think about

ARBs can increase potassium levels. They should not be used by pregnant women or people who have certain kidney problems.