

High Blood Pressure: ACE Inhibitors and ARBs



What do these medicines do?

ACE inhibitors and ARBs are medicines used to control blood pressure. They allow blood vessels to relax and open up, reducing blood pressure.

What are ACE inhibitors?

Angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors block an enzyme that narrows blood vessels. This makes blood vessels relax and widen, reducing blood pressure.

What are ARBs?

Angiotensin II receptor blockers (ARBs) also lower blood pressure. ARBs block angiotensin II, a hormone that causes blood vessels to narrow. This makes blood vessels relax and widen, and it reduces blood pressure.

Side effects of ACE inhibitors

Common side effects of this medicine include:

- A dry cough.
- Headaches.

Call your doctor if you have:

- Irregular heartbeats (this could be caused by too much potassium in your blood).
- Dizziness or lightheadedness or fainting.

Side effects of ARBs

Common side effects of this medicine include:

- Feeling lightheaded and dizzy.
- Sinus problems, such as a stuffy nose or a runny nose.
- Stomach problems.

What to think about

Your doctor may check your potassium levels and how your kidneys are working to make sure your medicine is not causing problems.

You should not take these medicines if you are pregnant or may become pregnant.

Tell your doctor about any medicines you are taking, including herbal remedies or over-the-counter medicines. ARBs and ACE inhibitors may interact with:

- Certain anti-inflammatory medicines.
- Antacids.
- Potassium supplements.
- Certain diuretics. These medicines remove water from the body.
- Lithium.

All medicines have side effects. But many people don't feel the side effects, or they are able to deal with them. 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. Here are some important things to think about:

- Usually the benefits of the medicine are more important than any minor side effects.
- Side effects may go away after you take the medicine for a while.

Always take your medicines just as your doctor says. If you have a problem with any of your medicines, call your doctor right away.

Call 911 if you think you are having a serious reaction, such as trouble breathing or swelling of your face, lips, tongue, throat, hands, or feet.