

Stewardship of the Body
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ACE Inhibitors (Angiotensin-converting enzyme inhibitors)

ACE inhibitors are used to treat high blood pressure (hypertension),

High blood pressure adds to the workload of the heart and arteries which can cause damage to the blood vessels in the brain, heart and kidneys, and result in a stroke, heart failure, or kidney failure. High blood pressure also may increase the risk of heart attacks.

ACE inhibitors also are used to decrease the workload of a weakened heart in congestive heart failure, decrease hospitalization and prolong life.

ACE inhibitors work by slowing the activity of the enzyme in your body that causes blood vessels to constrict. This allows the blood vessels to relax and expand, decreasing resistance so blood can flow more easily which lowers the blood pressure. This increases the heart's supply of blood and oxygen and decreases the heart's workload.

ACE inhibitors include:

Ramipril (Altace)	Captopril (Capoten)
Enalapril (Vasotec)	Fosinopril (Monopril)
Lisinopril (Prinivil or Zestril)	Quinapril (Accupril)
Trandolapril (Mavik)	Moexipril (Univasc)
Benazepril (Lotensin)	

ACE inhibitors should not be taken if you are pregnant or planning to become pregnant.

Some patients do not respond sufficiently to ACE inhibitors alone. In these cases, other drugs are used in combination with ACE inhibitors.

Ace inhibitors are relatively well-tolerated by most individuals. However, they do have some side effects. The most common side effects are: cough, elevated potassium levels, low blood pressure, dizziness, headache, drowsiness, weakness, abnormal taste (metallic or salty taste) and rash. More serious side effects, which are rare, include: kidney failure, allergic reactions, a decrease in white blood cells, and swelling of tissues (angioedema).

If you are taking an ACE inhibitor for high blood pressure you should do the following:

1. Have your blood pressure checked regularly (or check it yourself at home)
2. See your doctor regularly, at least twice a year or more
3. Have your blood tested for potassium levels and other tests as recommended by your doctor
4. Tell any health care provider that you see that you are taking an ACE inhibitor.

References: www.americanheart.org, Steps to Heart Health by Mayo Clinic