

Stewardship of the Body
By Virginia Esslinger, RN

“I give you thanks that I am fearfully, wonderfully made” (Ps. 139)

Beta Blockers

Beta blockers work by blocking the effects of beta-adrenergic substances such as epinephrine. This action slows the heart beat and lessens the force with which the heart muscle contracts thereby decreasing the heart’s workload and its need for blood and oxygen. They also help blood vessels relax and open up to improve blood flow.

Because of the way they work, beta blockers have a number of uses. They may be used to relieve and control angina (chest pain), prevent repeat heart attacks, treat irregular heart beats, and treat high blood pressure. Other uses include the treatment of migraine headaches, glaucoma, anxiety disorders, hyperthyroidism and certain types of tremors.

Beta Blockers include:

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| Acebutolol (Sectral) | Betaxolol (Kerlone) |
| Atenolol (Tenormin) | Carteolol (Cartrol) |
| Bisoprolol (Zabeta) | Propranolol (Inderal) |
| Nadolol (Corgard) | Timolol (Blocadren) |
| Labetalol (Trandate, Normadyne) | Carvedilol (Coreg) |
| Metoprolol (Lopressor, Lopressor LA, Toprol XL) | Sotalol (Betapace) |

Beta blockers can be given in combination with diuretics. Examples include:

Atenolol and hydrochlorothiazide (Lotensin)
Bisoprolol and hydrochlorothiazide (Ziac)
Nadolol and bendroflumethiazide (Corzide)
Propranolol and hydrochlorothiazide (Inderide)
Timolol and hydrochlorothiazide (Timolide)

Common side effects of beta blockers include fatigue, cold hands, dizziness and weakness. Less common side effects include shortness of breath, trouble sleeping, loss of sex drive and slow heartbeat.

Beta blockers generally are not used in people with asthma because of concerns that they may trigger severe asthma attacks. Also they can affect lipid levels, increasing the triglycerides and decreasing the HDL (good cholesterol). The changes in cholesterol generally are temporary.

Caution: Beta blockers never should be stopped abruptly because doing so could increase the risk of a heart attack or other heart problems. Never stop taking a beta blocker without first consulting your health care practitioner.

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