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The Royal Liverpool  
and Broadgreen  
University Hospitals  
NHS Trust

## Patient information

# Beta-Blockers

Pharmacy and Cardiology

**‘Beta-blockers’ is the name given to a group of medicines.**

**Your beta-blocker is called:**

.....

**Why has my doctor given me a beta-blocker and what are the benefits?**

You might have been given beta-blockers for one or more of the following reasons, but they also have other uses:

- To treat angina.
- To regulate heart rhythm.
- To help prevent another heart attack.
- To treat heart failure.
- To reduce high blood pressure.

Check with your doctor if you are still not sure why you have been prescribed a beta blocker.

**How do they work?**

Beta-blockers control your heart rate, which helps to reduce the work your heart has to do. Sometimes you will be given a small dose at first which will be gradually increased.

**How should I take my beta-blocker?**

Always follow the instructions on the label.

**Do not stop taking this medicine unless your doctor tells you to.**

**What should I do if I miss a dose?**

Take it as soon as you remember. If it is nearly time for the next dose, do not take the one you missed. Take the next dose at the usual time.

**Do not double the next dose.**

## **What are the risks of taking a beta-blocker?**

There are risks and benefits of taking all medicines however your doctor will discuss with you why there are more benefits than risks for you taking a beta-blocker. There are some side effects to all medicines.

## **What are the side effects of beta-blockers?**

All medicines have side effects. Not everybody will experience side effects.

- Some beta-blockers worsen symptoms of asthma. If you have asthma or become more breathless, check with your doctor that it is safe for you to continue taking your beta-blocker.
- Some beta-blockers can cause, or worsen, cold fingers and toes. See your doctor if this happens. This is especially important if you have diabetes.
- Some beta-blockers can affect diabetes. If you have diabetes it is important that you take extra care to measure your sugar levels because beta-blockers can:
  - make your blood sugar higher than usual.
  - reduce the feelings you get when your sugar levels are too low, so you may not notice the beginning of a hypoglycaemic attack.

Other side effects include light-headedness, slow heart rate, extreme tiredness, difficulty sleeping and, rarely, male impotence. If you notice any of these problems, discuss them with your doctor.

## **Can I take other medicines while taking beta-blockers?**

Some other medicines may affect how beta-blockers work. It is important that you check with your doctor or pharmacist before you take any other medicines, including ones that you buy.

## **Are there any alternative treatments available?**

There are other tablets for all of the conditions that beta-blockers are used for however beta-blockers are recommended in the National Guidelines (NICE) and if your doctor has prescribed a beta-blocker this may be the most appropriate tablet for you.

If you have any side effects, there may be an alternative that your doctor can prescribe so please discuss this with them.

## **What will happen if I decide not to have the beta-blocker?**

If you decide not to take the medicine you will not get any of the benefits. You must discuss this with your doctor as they need to know if you are not taking it and may prescribe an alternative for you.

This leaflet is not a substitute for any advice that your doctor, nurse or pharmacist may give you.

You can get more detailed information from the manufacturer's information leaflet.

## Feedback

Your feedback is important to us and helps us influence care in the future

Following your discharge from hospital or attendance at your outpatient appointment you will receive a text asking if you would recommend our service to others. Please take the time to text back, you will not be charged for the text and can opt out at any point. Your co-operation is greatly appreciated

## Further Information

**NHS website [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)**

**NHS 111 - 111 is the non-emergency number for urgent medical advice  
Tel: 111**

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