

1 About Taking Blood Pressure Medications

Your doctor has ordered blood pressure medications, but you feel just fine. Why do you need to take medicine?

The answer is that untreated high blood pressure can cause damage to the organs in your body, even if you have no symptoms. Uncontrolled blood pressure can lead to stroke, heart failure and kidney problems. Taking your blood pressure medicines – exactly as the doctor orders – can help you stay healthy.

Types of blood pressure medications

There are many types of medications that can lower blood pressure. Each type works in a different way. You may need to take two or more types of medicines. Your doctor will work with you to find the right medicines for you.

Here are some of the most common types of blood pressure drugs:¹

TYPE OF MEDICATION	HOW THEY WORK
Diuretics	These are sometimes called “water pills.” They work in the kidneys to help you flush out extra water and salt from your body. This can help your blood pressure drop.
Beta blockers	These make the heart beat less often and with less force, which can help lower your blood pressure.
Angiotensin converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors	These stop your body from making a hormone called angiotensin that narrows the blood vessels. Your blood vessels relax and open and can help your blood pressure drop.
Angiotensin receptor blockers	These drugs protect the blood vessels from angiotensin. The blood vessels open wider and can help your blood pressure drop.
Calcium channel blockers	These prevent calcium from entering the blood vessels and the heart muscle cells. This makes blood vessels relax and can help your blood pressure drop.

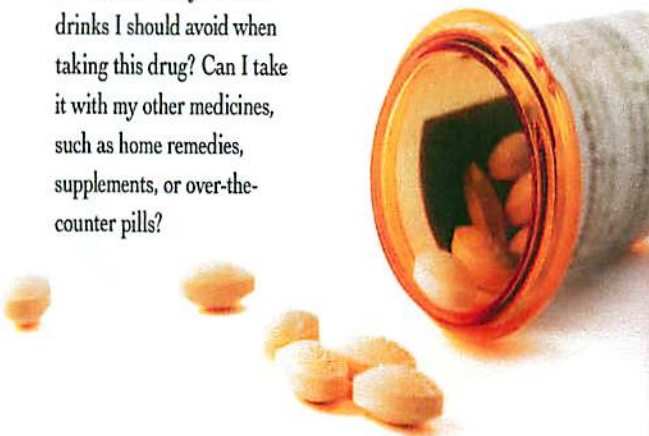


Many African Americans need to take more than one medication to lower their blood pressure. And some drugs can cause side effects. Don't stop taking your medicine without talking with your doctor. Tell your doctor about any problems you are having with side effects. Your doctor may change your medicine or lower the dose until he or she finds the ones that work best for you with the least side effects.¹

2 Getting the Most Out of Your Medicines

Make sure you know how to take your medicines and take them exactly as directed by your doctor. Your doctor or pharmacist can answer your questions. You should know these things:²

- ✓ **When to take it** – Is it best to take the pills in the morning or at night? What time of day is best? What should I do if I miss a dose?
- ✓ **What to expect** – Will I have any side effects when I take this medicine? What are they?
- ✓ **How to take it** – Should this medicine be taken with food or without food?
- ✓ **When to report to the doctor** – When should I report side effects to the doctor?
- ✓ **What to avoid when taking it** – Are there any foods or drinks I should avoid when taking this drug? Can I take it with my other medicines, such as home remedies, supplements, or over-the-counter pills?



3 Tips for Medication Safety

The medications your doctor has prescribed can help you when taken correctly. Here's what you should know about taking your medicines safely:^{2,3}

What medicine am I taking?

- Know the name, dosage strength, and color of each medicine you take. Keep a written record.
- Read the label and the instructions each time you take it.

taking. Don't take any medicine that has expired.

- Never take your pills in the dark, even if you think you know just where to find them. Turn on the light and make sure you know what you are taking!

How should I store my medicine?

- Store your pills in a cool, dry place. The bathroom is not always a good choice as it may be too damp.
- Keep medications out of the reach of children and pets.
- Do not remove the label on your medication. Keep your pills in the bottle they came in so you don't get mixed up.

What is the correct way to take my medicine?

- Never take medication that was not prescribed for you by your doctor. Don't share your medication with anyone else.
- Take your medications exactly as the directions say. Don't take more or less, even if you feel worse or better.
- Do not crush or break your pills unless you have been told to do so.
- Check the expiration date before

If you think you may have taken the wrong type or amount of pills, call your doctor right away!

Even if you are taking medicine to lower your blood pressure, it's important to eat the right foods and increase your physical activity. These lifestyle changes can help your medicine to work, or even help lower the amount of medicine you need.¹