



CALCIUM CHANNEL BLOCKER THERAPY

PREVENTING HEART ATTACKS AND STROKES

People with high blood pressure may be more likely to have a stroke or heart attack, or develop kidney disease. If you have high blood pressure, your doctor may prescribe certain medications to lower your risk for these things. Calcium channel blockers are one type of medication that can help control your blood pressure.

How do calcium channel blockers help control blood pressure?

Calcium channel blockers control how much calcium enters your cells. (People who take calcium channel blockers do not need to adjust their calcium intake.)

They relax the blood vessels so blood can flow more easily. Controlling blood pressure helps prevent strokes, heart attacks, and kidney problems.

Sometimes calcium channel blockers are prescribed to lower the effects of angina (pain or pressure across the chest, usually caused by activity). They may increase the ability to exercise without having angina symptoms as often.

Calcium channel blockers include:

- amlodipine
- felodipine
- nifedipine
- verapamil
- diltiazem

What problems could I have taking a calcium channel blocker?

Most people who take this medication have few or no side effects. Some people may feel dizziness, lightheadedness, swelling feet or ankles, flushing, or headache.

Monitoring your blood pressure regularly is important for anyone who takes blood pressure medicines. Calcium channel blockers do not require any blood tests for monitoring.

To reduce the risk of having problems taking a calcium channel blocker:

- To reduce dizziness and lightheadedness, move slowly when getting up from sitting or lying down.
- Do not eat or drink more than 8 oz. of grapefruit or grapefruit juice per day while taking calcium channel blockers.
- If you are pregnant or may become pregnant in the near future, talk with your doctor about taking a calcium channel blocker.

How do medications fit into my treatment plan?

Although medications are an important part of your treatment plan, they do not take the place of healthy eating, regular physical activity, and stress management.

If you are prescribed medications by your health care professional, it's important for you to take them as directed. Don't stop taking them without consulting with your health care professional first. If you are experiencing side effects, your health care professional may be able to change the medication or the dosage to prevent the side effects.

If you believe you cannot afford your medication, financial assistance may be available. To learn more, talk to the pharmacist or call the Medical Financial Assistance Program at 1-866-399-7696.

What do I need to know about my medications?

Before you leave the clinic, take the time to ask your doctor or member of your health care team about your medications. Ask:

- Why am I taking them?
- How often and how long should I take them?
- Are there any special instructions for taking this medication?
- Should I always take medications at mealtime?
- Are there activities that I should avoid while taking any medication?
- What kind of side effects could I have? What symptoms should I look for?
- How can I avoid side effects?

Understanding your medications

What should I do if I have side effects?

Be sure to tell your health care professional if there are reasons why you cannot take any medication that's prescribed. Also, tell your health care professional if you seem to have trouble remembering to take your medication.

Understanding your medications

- Review your medication record card regularly with your health care professionals, including your dentist.
- When you purchase any new medications, including over-the-counter medications, ask the pharmacist to check for any interactions with your current medications.
- Refill your medications at least one to two week(s) before you run out. Refills may be processed by phone, online through our Web site, or in person at the pharmacy. Refills may be delivered to your home by mail at no extra cost.

- If a health care professional recommends it, carry some kind of medical identification, like a Medic Alert bracelet. For more information, call 1-888-633-4298, or go to MedicAlert.org.

How can I remember to take my medications?

We all have a hard time adjusting to new routines in our lives. These tips work for others; maybe they can help you too.

- Make a simple chart and post it in an obvious place where you will see it every day, like the mirror in the bathroom.
- Set your alarm clock, watch, or computer as a reminder.
- Take medications at the same time every day: before bed, at mealtime, or at the beginning of a TV show you watch every day, such as the evening news.
- Use a pillbox with seven sections, one for each day of the week.
- Record your medications on a wallet card or calendar.

Can you think of others?

What else could I do to manage my medication?

- Take your medications at the same time every day: _____.
- Keep a personal medication record card (wallet card) with you and keep it up-to-date. Include any drug or food allergies that you may have and any over-the-counter or non-prescription medications, herbs, or supplements that you are taking.

Other resources

- Connect to our Web site at kp.org.
- Contact your Kaiser Permanente Health Education Center or Department for books, videos, classes, and additional resources.
- If you are hit, hurt, or threatened by a partner or spouse, this can seriously affect your health. There is help. Call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-7233 or connect to ndvh.org.

This information is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your physician or other health care professional. If you have persistent health problems, or if you have further questions, please consult your doctor. If you have questions or need more information about your medication, please speak to your pharmacist. Kaiser Permanente does not endorse the medications or products mentioned. Any trade names listed are for easy identification only.