



# How Can Blood Pressure Medicines Support My Health?

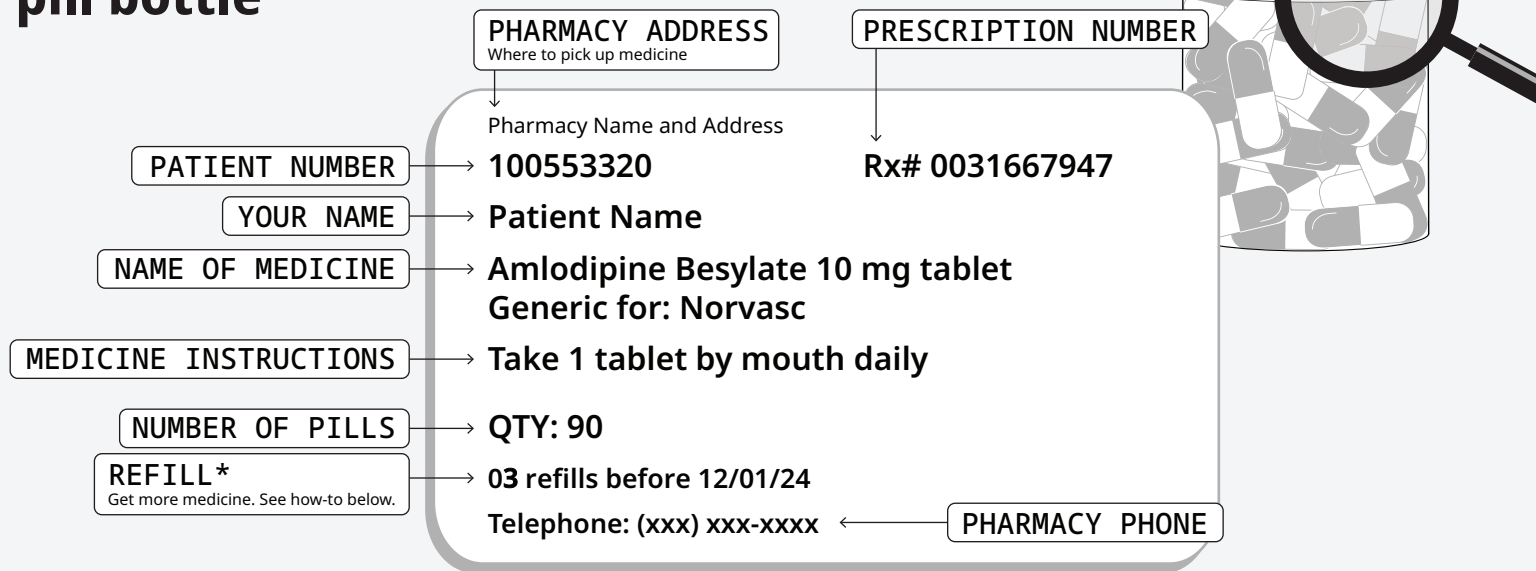
Most people with high blood pressure need to take blood pressure medicines. Blood pressure medicines are **safe, proven to work, and have low long-term risks.**

While there is no cure for high blood pressure, taking medicines – often for life – helps control blood pressure. This helps **lower the risk of heart attack, stroke, and other serious problems from high blood pressure.**

## Blood pressure medicines are usually prescribed by your doctor if:

- Your self-measured blood pressure numbers are consistently too high.
- Combining medicines with changes in daily habits can better lower your blood pressure.
- You have certain heart or health conditions.

## Understanding your pill bottle



### \*How to get more medicines or “refills.”

#### 2 weeks before you finish your medicine:

- If you have 1 or more refills remaining, call your pharmacy.  
For refills at L.A. Health Services pharmacies, call 800-500-1853. Go to pharmacy for pick up.
- If you have no refills remaining (or 0 refills), contact your doctor’s office.

# **What should I know about blood pressure medicines?**

## **1. Take your medicines on time, even when you feel well. Follow instructions on your pill bottle.**

- People usually feel completely normal when their blood pressure is high. This is why it's important to take blood pressure medicines on time, even when you feel well or have normal blood pressure numbers.
- If you're having issues, talk with your doctor before stopping medicines.

## **2. Figuring out which medicines best lower your blood pressure takes time. Be patient and voice any concerns about medicines with your doctor.**

- Your medicines can take a few weeks to lower your blood pressure.
- To find the right medicines for you, your doctor may carefully change the medicine strength (or "dose"), type of medicine, or add another medicine.
- Ask your doctor when is your next clinic appointment. Tell your doctors about any problems getting to appointments (transportation, etc.)

## **3. Medicines may cause side effects like coughing, diarrhea, or urinating often.**

- Different medicines work on different parts of the body. This is also why medicines may cause different side effects. Side effects may go away over time.
- Talk with your healthcare team if any side effects bother you.

## **4. Many people with high blood pressure are prescribed two or more medicines – often for life – that work together to lower blood pressure.**

- Two or more medicines lower blood pressure more than one medicine alone.

## **5. If you are taking other medicines or substances, talk with your doctor.**

- Some medicines may increase your blood pressure, including naproxen, ibuprofen, pseudoephedrine, some antidepressants, some birth control, caffeine, stimulants, and amphetamines.
- Use of substances, like cocaine or methamphetamine, can increase blood pressure. Talk with your doctor.

# Tips for Taking Blood Pressure Medicines

For many people, taking medicine is hard for different reasons. Here are some tips! Talk with your healthcare team about any concerns, so they can better support you.

## **“I feel fine. I don’t need to take medicines.”**

- Take your medicines on time because you can feel completely normal even when your blood pressure is high. Talk with your doctor before stopping medicines.
- Take your medicines as prescribed to help you prevent heart attack, stroke, and other serious problems from high blood pressure.

## **“I forget to take my medicines.”**

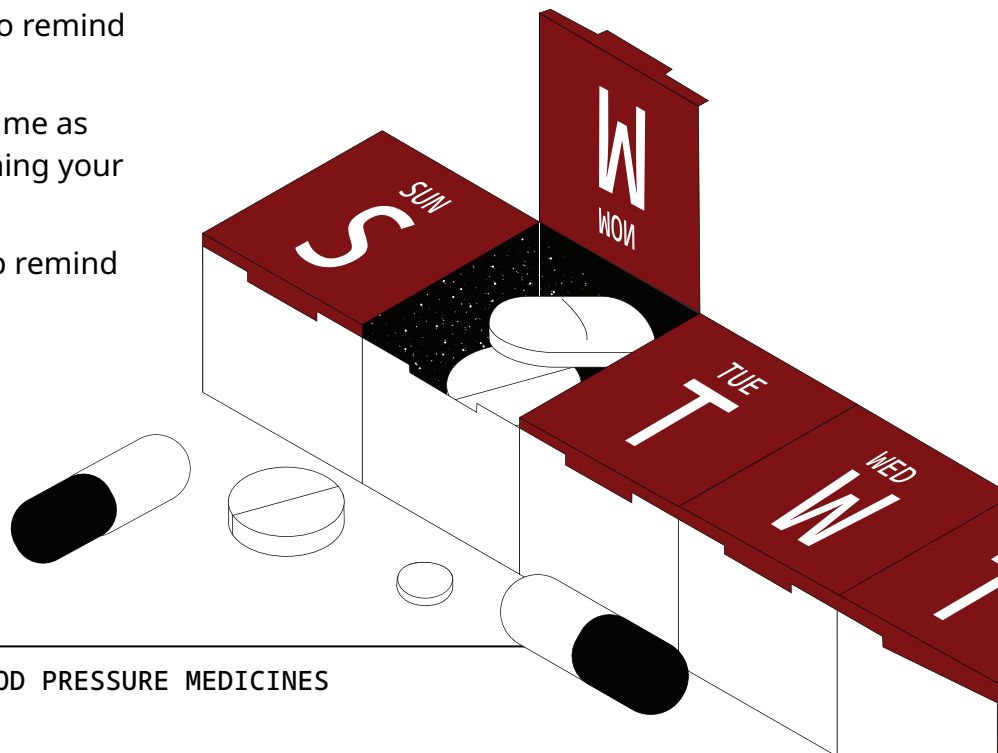
- If you are able to buy a low-cost pillbox, use it to sort your medicines each week. This makes it easier to know when you have and haven’t taken your medicines.
- Set a daily alarm on your phone to remind you to take medicines.
- Take your medicine at the same time as other daily habits, like after brushing your teeth.
- Ask your family or a friend to help remind you to take your medicines.

## **“I worry about taking too many medicines.”**

- Ask your doctor or pharmacist about combination pills, which blend multiple blood pressure medicines into one easy-to-take pill.
- Bring your medicine bottles to your doctor’s office, so they can go over your medicines with you.
- Keep a list of your medicines using AHA My Medication List or a phone app.

## **“I take supplements, traditional medicines, or herbal remedies.”**

- Bring your supplement list to your next doctor’s appointment.



### **“I forget to refill my medicines.”**

- Ask your pharmacy about automatic refills, prescription reminders, or both.
- Ask your doctor if your refills can last longer, possibly up to 90 days.
- Ask your pharmacy if they can mail your medicines to you.  
For patients of L.A. Health Services, call 213-288-8480 to sign up to get refills mailed to you. It's free! Two weeks before finishing your medicine, call 800-500-1853 for your refill to be mailed.

### **“I don't have the time or energy to think about blood pressure.”**

#### **“I don't know if medicines affect my health.”**

- Speak up! Talk with your doctor about your questions and concerns. You can bring family or a friend to help!

### **“I do not understand the label on my pill bottle.”**

- Talk to your pharmacist and doctor. They may print the label in languages of your choice or make the words larger.

### **“I think I am having side effects from my medicines, and I don't like them.”**

- If mild symptoms, continue taking your medicines and wait a few weeks to see how you feel. Many side effects improve after your body gets used to them.
- Talk with your doctor about trying a different medicine. People's bodies react to medicines differently. They want to help you find the right medicine for you.

### **“If I don't have health insurance, what are my options?”**

- L.A. Health Services is committed to helping patients get covered through Medi-Cal or providing financial assistance to patients through the Financial Assistance Programs. Please talk to your healthcare team for more information.

### **“My medicines are too expensive.”**

- Ask for “generic” or low-cost medicines, usually cheaper than “brand name” medicines. “Generic” and “brand name” medicines work the same!
- Use coupons or low-cost medicine programs.
- Talk with your healthcare team. They can refer you to L.A. Health Services Behavioral Health Team for resources.

# Understanding My Blood Pressure Medicines

## Choosing medicines

You and your doctor can choose from many great and safe blood pressure medicines. Talk with your doctor about what is most important to you:

- ☐ Number of times medicine is taken daily
- ☐ Side effects
- ☐ Medicine allergies
- ☐ How much you must pay for medicines
- ☐ If the medicine is available at your pharmacy

## For which side effects should I call my doctor immediately?

Some medicines *may* cause some of these not common, but serious side effects.

- Allergic reactions (hives, rash, peeling skin, facial swelling)
- Chest pain or pressure
- Swelling of mouth or neck associated with ACE inhibitors
- Depression
- Severe dizziness or passing out
- Heart rate that is too fast or too slow
- Liver problem signs (dark urine, throwing up, yellow skin or eyes)
- New numbness or tingling
- Kidney problems (like cannot pass urine, blood in urine)
- Shortness of breath
- Severe stomach pain
- Severe skin rash

## Ask your doctor questions that are important to you

- ☐ What is our goal?
- ☐ What are all my treatment options? Why? What are pros and cons of each option?
- ☐ What might happen if I do or do not follow the medical advice (like taking a medicine)?
- ☐ How long will I need to follow this advice?
- ☐ Can you write down this advice?

## Share your (and your loved ones') opinions.\*

- ☐ I would like to tell you what is most important to me (like family, health, work, money) and how that affects my health decisions.
- ☐ I (and my loved ones) have concerns about: \_\_\_\_\_ .

\*You can bring family or a friend to appointments. Or ask them to join your visit over the phone.

## Get clear communication:

- ☐ Can we use an interpreter for this language: \_\_\_\_\_ ?
- ☐ When should we schedule the next appointment?
- ☐ How should I contact you if I have questions or problems?

# Blood Pressure Medicines

→ Commonly used medicines in L.A. Health Services are in gray

Different medicines work with different parts of the body to lower blood pressure.  
Talk with your doctor before changing medicines or medicine doses.

<b>Names of Medicines</b> <i>how to pronounce the name</i>	<b>Type of medicine</b>	<b>How the medicine lowers blood pressure</b>	<b>Common side effects</b> <i>people may have none, one, or some listed side effects that may go away over time</i>
<b>Amiloride</b> <i>a mil' oh ride</i>	Diuretic or "water pill"	Relaxes blood vessels by working on kidneys	Diarrhea, gas, headache, heartburn, upset stomach
<b>Amlodipine</b> <i>am-loh-dih-peen</i>	Calcium Channel Blocker	Relaxes blood vessels	Ankle swelling, dizziness, flushing, nausea, sleepy, upset stomach
<b>Atenolol</b> <i>a ten' oh lol</i>	Beta Blocker	Slows heart rate and relaxes blood vessels	Diarrhea, dizziness, tired, nausea
<b>Benazepril</b> <i>ben-az-eh-pril</i>	Angiotensin Converting Enzyme (ACE) Inhibitor	Relaxes blood vessels and works on kidneys to remove water and salt through urine	Cough, dizziness, headache
<b>Bumetanide</b> <i>byoo met' a nide</i>	Loop diuretic or "water pill"	Removes water and salt through urine by working on kidneys	Frequent urination, dizziness, headache, upset stomach
<b>Captopril</b> <i>kap' toe pril</i>	Angiotensin Converting Enzyme (ACE) Inhibitor	Relaxes blood vessels and works on kidneys to remove water and salt through urine	Cough, dizziness, taste changes
<b>Carvedilol</b> <i>kar' ve dil ol</i>	Beta Blocker	Slows heart rate and relaxes blood vessels	Dizziness, headache, weight gain, diarrhea, upset stomach, joint pain
<b>Chlorthalidone</b> <i>klor-thal-ih-done</i>	Diuretic or "water pill"	Removes water and salt through urine by working on kidneys	Cramps, constipation, diarrhea, dizziness, headache, upset stomach
<b>Clonidine</b> <i>kloe' ni deen</i>	Alpha Agonist	Relaxes heart muscle and blood vessels by working with the brain	Dry mouth, constipation, dizziness, headache, upset stomach <i>*If extended release: bad dreams, low appetite, irritable mood</i>
<b>Diltiazem</b> <i>dil tye' a zem</i>	Calcium Channel Blocker	Relaxes blood vessels and heart muscle	Constipation, cough, dizziness, flushing, headache, tired
<b>Enalapril</b> <i>e nal' a pril</i>	Angiotensin Converting Enzyme (ACE) Inhibitor	Relaxes blood vessels and works on kidneys to remove water and salt through urine	Cough, dizziness
<b>Enalapril and Hydrochlorothiazide (HCTZ)</b>	"Combination pill" that includes two medicines, enalapril and HCTZ		Frequent urination, cough, dizziness, headache, constipation, diarrhea
<b>Furosemide</b> <i>fyoor oh' se mide</i>	Loop diuretic or "water pill"	Removes water and salt through urine by working on kidneys	Frequent urination, constipation, diarrhea, dizziness, headache, stomach cramps
<b>Hydralazine</b> <i>hye dral' a zeen</i>	Direct vasodilator	Relaxes blood vessels	Diarrhea, headache, low appetite, upset stomach, rash, flushing
<b>Hydrochlorothiazide (HCTZ)</b> <i>hye-droe-klor-oh-thy-ah-zide</i>	Diuretic or "water pill"	Removes water and salt through urine by working on kidneys	Frequent urination, constipation, diarrhea, dizziness, headache, stomach cramps
<b>Indapamide</b> <i>in dap' a mide</i>	Diuretic or "water pill"	Removes water and salt through urine by working on kidneys	Back pain, headache, runny nose, dizziness, cramps, feeling nervous

<b>Names of Medicines</b> <i>how to pronounce the name</i>	<b>Type of medicine</b>	<b>How the medicine lowers blood pressure</b>	<b>Common side effects</b> <i>people may have none, one, or some listed side effects that may go away over time</i>
<b>Labetalol</b> <i>la bet' a lol</i>	Beta Blocker	Slows heart rate and relaxes blood vessels	Dizziness, stuffy nose, tingling scalp, upset stomach
<b>Lisinopril</b> <i>lys-in-oh-pril</i>	Angiotensin Converting Enzyme (ACE) Inhibitor	Relaxes blood vessels and works on kidneys to remove water and salt through urine	Cough, dizziness, headache, low energy
<b>Lisinopril and Hydrochlorothiazide (HCTZ)</b>	“Combination pill” that includes two medicines, lisinopril and HCTZ.		Frequent urination, cough, dizziness, headache, weakness, constipation, diarrhea
<b>Losartan</b> <i>loe-sar-tan</i>	Angiotensin Receptor Blockers (ARB)	Relaxes blood vessels and works on kidneys to remove water and salt through urine	Back pain, cold symptoms, diarrhea, dizziness, heartburn, stuffy nose
<b>Losartan and Hydrochlorothiazide (HCTZ)</b>	“Combination pill” that includes two medicines, losartan and HCTZ.		Frequent urination, back pain, cold symptoms, dizziness, constipation, diarrhea
<b>Methyldopa</b> <i>meth ill doe' pa</i>	Alpha Agonist	Relaxes heart muscle and blood vessels by working with the brain	Ankle swelling, dry mouth, headache, sleepiness, feeling weak
<b>Metolazone</b> <i>me tol' a zone</i>	Diuretic or “water pill”	Removes water and salt through urine by working on kidneys	Bloating, constipation, diarrhea, dizziness, headache, joint pain
<b>Metoprolol Succinate</b> <b>Metoprolol Tartrate</b> <i>me toe' proe lol</i>	Beta Blocker	Slows heart rate and relaxes blood vessels	Diarrhea, dizziness, upset stomach
<b>Minoxidil</b> <i>mi nox' i dill</i>	Direct vasodilator	Relaxes blood vessels	Hair growth, upset stomach, vomiting
<b>Nifedipine</b> <i>nye-fed-ih-peen</i>	Calcium Channel Blocker	Relaxes blood vessels	Dizziness, flushing, nervous feeling, headache, heartburn, upset stomach
<b>Propranolol</b> <i>proe pran' oh lol</i>	Beta Blocker	Slows heart rate and relaxes blood vessels	Constipation, diarrhea, dizziness, stomach cramps, tired, upset stomach, strange dreams
<b>Spironolactone</b> <i>spir on' oh lak' tone</i>	Diuretic or Aldosterone Antagonist	Removes water and salt through urine by working on kidneys	Nausea, diarrhea, dizziness, hair loss, headache, stomach cramps
<b>Terazosin</b> <i>ter ay' zoe sin</i>	Alpha Blocker	Relaxes blood vessels	Weakness, dizziness, headache, low energy, stuffy nose
<b>Torsemide</b> <i>tore' se mide</i>	Loop diuretic or “water pill”	Removes water and salt through urine by working on kidneys	Frequent urination, cough, constipation, diarrhea, sore throat, headache, upset stomach
<b>Triamterene and Hydrochlorothiazide (HCTZ)</b>	“Combination pill” that includes two medicines, triamterene and HCTZ.		Frequent urination, constipation, diarrhea, dizziness, headache, nausea
<b>Verapamil</b> <i>ver ap' a mil</i>	Calcium Channel Blocker	Relaxes heart muscle and blood vessels	Constipation, dizziness, headache

References:

1. Medline. [www.medlineplus.gov/druginfo/meds](http://www.medlineplus.gov/druginfo/meds)
2. Uptodate Patient Drug Information. [www.uptodate.com/contents/](http://www.uptodate.com/contents/)

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