

Commonly Prescribed Medications



This section contains information about medications that are commonly prescribed following a VAD placement. One of the most important responsibilities you will have after surgery is to take your medications correctly. Before you leave the hospital we will teach you about your medications: why you are taking them, potential side effects, the dose and when you should take them.

Medications are prescribed on an individual basis. Some medications will be necessary during your immediate recovery period and others will be needed indefinitely. When you go home, take only the medications your doctor has prescribed for you.

If you are being followed by any specialty doctors, they should be the main contact for questions and refills related to the medications they prescribe and manage for you. Examples of conditions specialty doctors follow include: allergies, diabetes, kidney disease, gout/arthritis etc.

Where can I get my prescriptions filled?

Before going home, you will need a 30-day supply of all your medications.

As you are preparing for discharge, your care team will send your home prescriptions down to the Michigan Medicine outpatient pharmacy located on the first floor of the Taubman Center to be filled. During your final community outing, we will have you and your family member or friend go down to pick them up.

Here is a table of the most common medications prescribed after LVAD surgery and important information you should know:

Medication	What is this medicine used for?	What are the possible side effects?	How do I take this medicine?
Beta blockers			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Metoprolol (Toprol XL®) • Carvedilol (Coreg®) • Bisoprolol (Zebeta®) 	<p>Beta blockers block the effects of stress hormones on your heart that makes your heart failure worse. Beta-blockers also slow your heart rate. This protects it from going too fast.</p>	<p>These medicines may lower your heart rate and blood pressure. After first starting, or with an increased dose, you may feel tired, however this will improve in time. If you feel lightheaded or dizzy, tell your doctor.</p>	<p>Metoprolol XL and Carvedilol are best taken with food. Bisoprolol can be taken with or without food.</p>
ACE inhibitors			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lisinopril (Prinivil®, Zestril®) • Enalapril (Vasotec®) • Ramipril (Altace®) 	<p>These medicines lower your blood pressure by making your blood vessels wider. This helps blood flow away from your heart easier.</p>	<p>A side effect of these medicines is dry cough. If this happens, you can talk to your doctor about switching to another medicine.</p> <p>Low blood pressure may happen with these medicines. If you feel lightheaded or dizzy, talk to your doctor.</p>	<p>Most ACE inhibitors can be taken with or without food.</p>
Aldosterone antagonists			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spironolactone (Aldactone®) • Eplerenone (Inspra®) 	<p>These medicines block the effects of a stress hormone (aldosterone) which can make heart failure worse. These medicines are also weak diuretics.</p>	<p>These medicines may increase your potassium levels. Your doctor will monitor this with blood tests.</p>	<p>It is best to take these medicines in the morning.</p>

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Diuretics or “water pills”			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Furosemide (Lasix®) ♦ Bumetanide (Bumex®) ♦ Torsemide (Demadex®) 	<p>These medicines help your body remove extra fluid by making you urinate.</p>	<p>Low blood pressures may happen with these medicines. If you start to feel dizzy or lightheaded, call your doctor.</p> <p>These medicines may decrease your potassium levels. Your doctor will monitor this with blood tests. You may need to take potassium supplements to keep your levels in range.</p>	<p>It is best to take these medicines in the morning. Do not take your diuretic before going to bed.</p> <p>If you take a diuretic twice daily, take your first dose early in the morning and the second dose around 2pm or 3pm. This helps prevent your need to get up at night to use the bathroom.</p>
Medications to treat electrolyte imbalances			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Magnesium oxide ♦ Potassium chloride ♦ (Klor-Con®) 	<p>Electrolytes are substances your body needs to maintain fluid balance and help with other functions of your body. If you are on a “diuretic” medicine, you will lose extra fluid which can lead to a loss of magnesium and potassium.</p>	<p>Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, or abdominal pain may occur.</p>	<p>Take with food to avoid nausea.</p>

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Cholesterol lowering medicines			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Atorvastatin (Lipitor®) • Rosuvastatin (Crestor®) • Pravastatin (Pravachol®) 	These medicines not only lower your cholesterol but also reduce inflammation in your blood vessels.	Muscle pain may happen with this medicine. If this happens, talk to your doctor.	This medicine works best when you take it at night.
Antiarrhythmic medications			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amiodarone (Pacerone®) • Mexiletine 	Antiarrhythmic medications prevent or reverse irregular heart rhythms.	<p>Amiodarone makes you sensitive to the sun.</p> <p>Nausea may occur with both medications.</p>	Take with food to avoid nausea. Use sunscreen when outdoors if you are taking amiodarone. Do not suddenly stop taking these medications without asking your doctor.
Miscellaneous			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digoxin 	Digoxin may improve your heart function by making the heart beat stronger.	High amounts of digoxin may cause nausea/vomiting or blurred/colored vision. If you notice any of these problems, call your healthcare provider right away.	Take at the same time each day in the afternoon or evening.

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Anticoagulant medications			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warfarin (Coumadin®) • Enoxaparin (Lovenox®) • Fondaparinux (Arixtra®) 	Anticoagulant medications help to prevent blood clots from forming. If blood clots form sometimes they can interfere with your pump.	Bleeding can occur with blood thinners. Call 911 or go to the Emergency Room if you have any major bleeding, such as blood in your urine or stool, or coughing or vomiting blood (please see you Warfarin handout for more information). Please see your handouts for how to manage minor bleeding, such as minor nosebleeds.	<p>Take warfarin at the same time each day, usually in the evening. Eating a diet consistent in vitamin K foods is important with warfarin.</p> <p>You will be instructed to use Lovenox® or Arixtra® only if your INR level is too low.</p>
Antiplatelet medications			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aspirin 	Antiplatelet medicines help to prevent blood clots from forming by stopping your platelets from clumping. If blood clots form sometimes they can interfere with your pump.	May increase your chance of bleeding.	If you have nausea, take with food.
Bleeding prevention			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Omeprazole (Prilosec®) 	Protects your stomach from bleeding by reducing the amount of acid in your stomach.	Abdominal pain, gas, diarrhea, low magnesium levels with long-term use.	Take on an empty stomach about 30 minutes before breakfast.

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Lung pressure			
♦ Sildenafil (Revatio®)	Lowers the pressure in your lung vessels to help reduce the workload on your heart.	Warmth or redness in face, neck, arms or upper chest, upset stomach, headache, nose bleeds.	Try to take at the same times each day.
Vitamins/supplements			
♦ Ascorbic acid “Vitamin C” ♦ Ferrous sulfate “Iron” ♦ Folic acid ♦ Multivitamin	To prevent or treat low levels or vitamins/supplements.	Iron can cause nausea, constipation, and dark/green stools.	If you have nausea, you may take with food. Ask your doctor if you have issues with constipation, you may take a stool softener or laxative.

Tip:

It is best to ask for prescription refills of your medications during your clinic visits. You can also request them via the Secure Patient Portal. If you don't use the internet, you can request them via phone by calling the VAD office during normal business hours Monday - Friday 8am - 5pm. Please allow **two business days'** turnaround time to handle refill requests. For this reason, we encourage you to monitor your medications and request refills in a timely manner. In most cases, regular refills will not be ordered from the pharmacy after office hours.

Here are some Do's and Don'ts when it comes to your medications

DO:

- ☐ Learn both the generic and brand names of all your drugs.
- ☐ Keep a list of all your prescription and over-the-counter drugs, dosages, and purposes.
- ☐ Keep this list up to date and carry with you at all times.
- ☐ Take this list to all of your appointments and show it to your healthcare providers.
- ☐ Take your medicines exactly as directed. Using them the wrong way can make you feel worse instead of better.
- ☐ Take only what is prescribed for you.
- ☐ Refill your prescriptions on time. If your prescription is running low, call your physician for a refill.
- ☐ Call your healthcare provider or pharmacist right away if you have any medication questions.
- ☐ Read and save written information that comes with your prescriptions and over-the-counter medications. This written information will tell you what kind of side effects may occur.

DON'T:

- ☐ Don't take medications you were taking before surgery without first talking to your surgeon. This includes herbal supplements or other non-prescription drugs.
- ☐ Don't stop taking your prescribed medicine just because you are feeling better.
- ☐ Don't stop, skip or take an extra dose of your medication without checking with your doctor.
- ☐ Don't drink alcohol while taking a medicine unless your doctor says it's okay.
- ☐ Don't be afraid to contact your healthcare provider or pharmacist if you have any questions!
- ☐ Don't take non-steroidal anti-inflammatory (NSAID) products (Advil®, Motrin®, Aleve®, or Naprosyn®) while taking blood thinners.

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