



# MDwise

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## Heart Failure: ARBs

Angiotensin II receptor blockers (ARBs) help improve blood flow and lower blood pressure. This may make it easier for your heart to work.

### Examples

- Candesartan
- Eprosartan
- Irbesartan
- Losartan
- Olmesartan
- Valsartan

Some of these medicines may be combined with another medicine in one pill. Putting medicines together in one pill makes it easier to take and gives you the benefit of both drugs. For example, an ARB may be combined with a diuretic ("water pill").

### How do ARBs work?

ARBs block the action of chemicals in the body that narrow blood vessels. These medicines cause blood vessels to widen and relax. This makes it easier for blood to flow, and it lowers blood pressure. It also reduces the backup of blood in the heart and lungs.

These medicines help your body release water and salt. This also lowers blood pressure.

### Why are these medicines used to treat heart failure?

ARBs may be used by people who cannot take



ACE inhibitor medicines. ACE inhibitors can cause an annoying cough. This may be hard for some people to live with. So doctors may prescribe an ARB instead.

### Who should not take an ARB?

Do **NOT** take an ARB if:

- You had a bad reaction when you took an ARB before.
- You have certain kidney problems. Talk with your doctor about this.
- You are pregnant.

### How well do these medicines work?

ARBs can lower the risk of death from heart failure. ARBs also reduce the number of people with heart failure who need to go into the hospital. ARBs have been shown to work as well as ACE inhibitors for heart failure.

## Side effects

Ask your pharmacist about the side effects of each medicine you take. Side effects are also listed in the information that comes with your medicine. Common side effects of these medicines include:

- Dizziness or lightheadedness.
- Sinus problems, such as a stuffy nose or a runny nose.
- Stomach problems.

If you are taking other medicines, talk with your doctor before you take an ARB. This includes medicines you can buy without a prescription, vitamins, herbs, and other supplements.

ARBs can react with other medicines, such as nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs). NSAIDs are medicines that reduce swelling, such as ibuprofen, naproxen, and aspirin. ARBs may also react with antacids, potassium supplements, some diuretics, and lithium.

Call your doctor if you think you are having a problem with your medicine. **Call 911 right away** if you think you are having a serious reaction, such as trouble breathing.

## What to think about

You may need regular blood tests to monitor how the medicine is working in your body and to see if this medicine is causing problems.



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