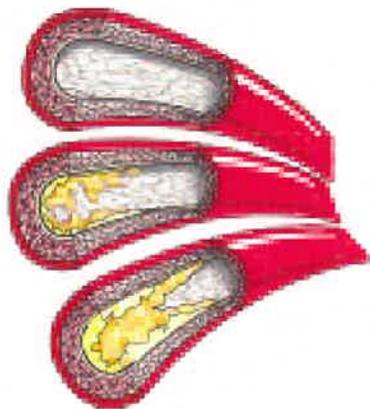




# TAKE WHAT YOU NEED TO HELP PREVENT A HEART ATTACK AND STROKE



## Do you have?

- Diabetes
- Peripheral Arterial Disease
- Heart Disease
- Chronic Kidney Disease
- Stroke
- Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm

These conditions are caused by or can lead to atherosclerosis, which is when fat like deposits called plaque, build up in your artery walls. Over time, this condition can narrow the space inside the artery and harden the walls of the blood vessel. This can make it difficult for blood and oxygen to flow through.

Atherosclerosis can lead to a stroke or heart attack.

If the plaque grows large enough to block off an artery in your heart, blood cannot reach the heart muscle. This lack of blood and oxygen can cause chest pain (angina) or a heart attack.

More often, plaque becomes unstable and breaks loose. When this happens, a blood clot forms in the damaged area. The clot can block blood flow. If the artery bringing blood to the brain is blocked, a stroke occurs. If the artery in the heart is blocked, a heart attack occurs.

## Other risk factors or causes of atherosclerosis:

- smoking
- being overweight
- not getting enough activity
- high cholesterol
- high blood pressure

## Risk factors you cannot change:

- family history of heart disease
- older age (as you age, your risk goes up)

The good news is there are ways to treat atherosclerosis and reduce

your chances of having a stroke or heart attack:

## Take some or all of these preventive medications:

1. Aspirin
2. Statin
3. ACE Inhibitor
4. Beta Blocker

Talk with your health care professional to find out if some or all of these medications are right for you.

## Make healthy lifestyle choices:

- Eat a low fat, high fiber diet.
- Be physically active for 30 minutes or more on most days of the week.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Quit smoking, if you smoke.

What are you doing to take care of your health?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_



Regional Health Education



# Understanding your medications

It is important to understand how your medications work, possible side effects, and when and how you should take them. Most people have questions or concerns about medications they are currently taking or starting to take. Talk with your health care team to learn more about your medications. Below are some important questions to ask:

- Why am I taking this medication?
- When and how should I take this medicine?
- What are the possible side effects?
- If I notice a side effect, what should I do?
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## Taking other medications

Be careful of over-the-counter medication and herbal or weight loss supplements. Read the labels on the bottle or box carefully. Some over-the-counter medicines include warnings that state they should not be used by people at risk for a heart attack or stroke. Let your health care professional know if you are taking any over-the-counter medicines.

| Medications  | My plan<br>(Fill out with your health care professional.)   |
|--|---|
| <p><b>ACE* Inhibitor</b><br/>ACE Inhibitors lower blood pressure by causing the blood vessels to relax and widen. This increases the supply of blood and oxygen to the heart and helps the heart beat more easily. Other names: Lisinopril (Prinivil, Zestril), Captopril (Capoten).<br/>*Angiotensin Converting Enzyme</p>  | <p>Should I take this medication?<br/><input type="checkbox"/> YES<br/>How much do I take (dose):<br/><br/>How often do I take it:<br/><br/><input type="checkbox"/> NO</p> |
| <p><b>Beta-Blocker</b><br/>Beta-blockers reduce the workload of the heart by relaxing the heart muscle and by slowing down the heart rate. This allows your heart to pump blood more easily. Beta-blockers are used to treat high blood pressure, heart failure, irregular heart beats, blocked coronary arteries, and angina. Other names: Atenolol (Tenormin), Metoprolol (Lopressor).</p> | <p>Should I take this medication?<br/><input type="checkbox"/> YES<br/>How much do I take (dose):<br/><br/>How often do I take it:<br/><br/><input type="checkbox"/> NO</p> |
| <p><b>Aspirin</b><br/>Aspirin reduces the stickiness of blood cells, called platelets. This lowers the chances of platelets clumping together, forming a blood clot. Clots can cause a blockage in your arteries and lead to a heart attack or stroke.</p>   | <p>Should I take this medication?<br/><input type="checkbox"/> YES<br/>How much do I take (dose):<br/><br/>How often do I take it:<br/><br/><input type="checkbox"/> NO</p> |
| <p><b>Statins</b><br/>Statins work to lower your LDL (bad) cholesterol, which builds up in your artery walls, making them narrow. They also increase your HDL (good) cholesterol, reduce your triglycerides, and may help to prevent blood clots and inflammation inside your arteries. Other names: Lovastatin (Mevacor), Simvastatin (Zocor).</p>  | <p>Should I take this medication?<br/><input type="checkbox"/> YES<br/>How much do I take (dose):<br/><br/>How often do I take it:<br/><br/><input type="checkbox"/> NO</p> |

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.

# Statin Therapy: Preventing Heart Attacks and Strokes



If you are at risk for developing heart disease—or even if you have already had a heart attack—taking a statin every day can help keep you healthy. People who take statins daily are much less likely of having a heart attack or dying from a heart attack or stroke.

## How do statins help with heart disease?

Most people think statins are just for lowering cholesterol, but they are also a very helpful medicine for your heart and blood vessels.

Statins work to lower your LDL (bad) cholesterol, which builds up in your artery walls, making them narrow. They also increase your HDL (good) cholesterol, reduce your triglycerides and may help to prevent blood clots and inflammation inside your arteries.

While taking a statin by itself is not enough to prevent heart attacks and strokes, it is an important part of your medical treatment. It is common to take other medications in addition to a statin to help protect against a heart attack or stroke. Ask your health care team about other medications that may help you.

## What problems could I have taking a statin?

Most people who take this medication have few or no side effects. Some people experience mild upset stomach, gas, constipation, abdominal pain, or cramps.

Severe muscle pain (or rhabdomyolysis) is a rare side effect that happens in very few people who use statins. If you experience severe muscle pain, severe weakness, or brown urine, contact your health care professional immediately.

## To reduce the risk of having problems taking a statin:

- Avoid eating grapefruit or drinking grapefruit juice.
- If you choose to drink alcohol, do so in moderation (2 drinks per day for a man, and 1 for a woman).  
One drink = 12oz of beer, 4oz of wine or 1.5oz shot of hard liquor, such as brandy, gin, or vodka.

- **Do not** take a statin if you are pregnant or may become pregnant in the near future, because of the risk of birth defects.
- Avoid taking a statin if you have severe liver or kidney damage.

## Can taking a statin increase my chances of liver irritation?

Most people who take statins do not develop liver problems. Blood tests are done periodically to monitor your liver function.

## How do medications (in general) 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 doctor, it's important for you to take them as directed. Don't stop taking them without consulting with your doctor first. If you are experiencing side effects, your doctor may be able to change the medication or the dosage to prevent side effects. It's likely that you may need to take this

“Statins” are a group of cholesterol lowering medications that include:

- Lovastatin (Mevacor)
- Simvastatin (Zocor)

medication for the rest of your life, so work with your doctor to ensure that you are taking the right medicine and dose for you. If you feel that you cannot afford your medication, financial assistance may be available. To learn more, talk to the pharmacist or call the Medical Financial Assistance Program (MFAP) 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:

- Why am I taking them?
- How often and how long should I take them?
- Are there any special instructions for taking a particular medication?
- Should I only take any medication only at mealtime?
- Are there activities that I should avoid while taking any medication?
- What kind of side effects could I have and what symptoms should I look for?
- Is there a way to avoid any side effects?

### What should I do if I have side effects?

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

### How can I remember to take my medications?

Everyone has struggled with remembering to do things that they don't regularly do. There are a number of things that can help you remember.

- Make a simple chart and post it in an obvious place where you will see it every day, like on the mirror in the bathroom.
- Set an alarm clock or watch for a reminder.
- Establish a daily routine for taking your medications every day, such as at bedtime, mealtime, or while at the beginning of a daily TV show, such as the evening news.
- Use a pillbox that has seven sections, representing the days 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?

- 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 non-prescription medications, herbs, or supplements that you are taking.
- Review your medication record card regularly with your doctor or other health care professional, 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 doctor or other 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**.

### Other resources

- Connect to our Web site at **members.kp.org**.
- Check your *Kaiser Permanente Healthwise Handbook*.
- Listen to the Kaiser Permanente Healthphone at 1-800-332-7563. For TTY, call 1-800-777-9059.
- Contact your Kaiser Permanente Health Education Center or Department for books, videos, classes, and additional resources.

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.

# ACE Inhibitor Therapy: Preventing Heart Attacks and Strokes



If you are at risk for developing heart disease—or even if you have already had a heart attack—taking an ACE Inhibitor every day can help keep you healthy. People who take ACE Inhibitors daily are much less likely of having a heart attack or dying from a heart attack or stroke.

## How do ACE Inhibitors help with heart disease?

Most people think ACE Inhibitors are just for lowering blood pressure but they are also a very helpful medicine for your heart and blood vessels.

ACE Inhibitors lower blood pressure by causing the blood vessels to relax and widen. This increases the supply of blood and oxygen to the heart and helps the heart beat more easily.

They are also used to treat and prevent kidney problems. While taking an ACE Inhibitor by itself is not enough to prevent heart attacks and strokes, it is an important part of your medical treatment.

It is common to take other medications in addition to ACE Inhibitors to help protect against a heart attack or stroke. Ask your health care professional for more information about other medications that may help you.

## What problems could I have taking an ACE Inhibitor?

Most people who take this medication have few or no side effects. Some people get a mild cough or tickle in the back of the throat. The cough is usually not very bothersome and it is not always necessary to stop the ACE Inhibitor medication.

Very rarely, some people who take ACE Inhibitors have swelling of the face, eyes, lips, tongue, or throat. Some have difficulty breathing, but this happens in very few people who use ACE Inhibitors. If you experience unusual swelling, call your health care professional. If you experience difficulty breathing, call 911 or go to the emergency department immediately.

Some people who take ACE Inhibitors can develop a high potassium level. Since there are usually no symptoms for high potassium, your health care professional may ask you to have a blood test so it can be monitored.

## To reduce the risk of having problems taking an ACE Inhibitor:

- **Do not** take an ACE Inhibitor if you are pregnant or may become pregnant in the near future.
- Tell your doctor or health care professional if you have kidney problems, are using diuretics (water pills), are taking potassium supplements, or using salt substitutes.

## Can taking an ACE Inhibitor increase my chances of having kidney problems?

Most people who take ACE Inhibitors do not develop kidney problems. Your doctor may ask you to have a blood test to monitor your kidney function.

ACE (Angiotensin Converting Enzyme) Inhibitors are a group of medications which include:

- Lisinopril (Prinivil, Zestril)
- Captopril (Capoten)

## How do medications (in general) 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. It's likely that you may need to take this medication for the rest of your life, so work with your health care professional to ensure that you are taking the right medicine and dose for you. If you feel you cannot afford your medication, financial assistance may be available. To learn more, talk to the pharmacist or call the Medical Financial Assistance Program (MFAP) at 1-866-399-7696.

## What do I need to know about my medications?

Take the time to ask your doctor or health care professional about your medications:

- Why am I taking them?
- How often and how long should I take them?
- Are there any special instructions for taking a particular medication?
- Should I take any medication only at mealtime?

- Are there activities that I should avoid while taking any medication?
- What kind of side effects could I have and what symptoms should I look for?
- Is there a way to avoid any side effects?

## 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.

## How can I remember to take my medications?

Everyone has struggled with remembering to do things that they don't regularly do. There are a number of things that can help you remember.

- Make a simple chart and post it in an obvious place where you will see it every day, like on the mirror in the bathroom.
- Set an alarm clock or watch for a reminder.
- Establish a daily routine for taking your medications every day, such as at bedtime, mealtime, or while at the beginning of a daily TV show such as the evening news.
- Use a pillbox that has seven sections, representing the days 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?

- 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.
- Review your medication record card regularly with your health care professional, 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](http://MedicAlert.org).

## Other resources

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If you have an emergency medical condition, call 911 or go to the nearest hospital. An emergency medical condition is (1) a medical or psychiatric condition that manifests itself by acute symptoms of sufficient severity (including severe pain) such that you could reasonably expect the absence of immediate medical attention to result in serious jeopardy to your health or serious impairment or dysfunction of your bodily functions or organs; or (2) when you are in active labor and there isn't enough time for safe transfer to a Plan hospital before delivery, or if transfer poses a threat to your or your unborn child's health and safety.

# Aspirin Therapy: Preventing Heart Attacks and Strokes



*People who take aspirin daily are much less likely of having a heart attack or dying from a heart attack or stroke.*

If you are at risk for developing heart disease—or even if you have already had a heart attack—taking an aspirin every day can help keep you healthy. People who take aspirin daily are much less likely of having a heart attack or dying from a heart attack or stroke.

## How does aspirin help with heart disease?

Most people think aspirin is just for aches and pains, but it is also a very helpful medicine for your heart and blood vessels.

Aspirin works by reducing the stickiness of the blood cells (called platelets) so they don't clump together, form a clot, or stick to the walls of the arteries, making them narrow. While aspirin itself is not enough to prevent heart disease and strokes, it is an important part of your medical treatment.

## What problems could I have taking aspirin?

The most common problem or side effect of taking aspirin is stomach irritation. This happens in very few people who use aspirin. Other problems experienced by regular aspirin users have included nausea, vomiting, indigestion, heartburn, severe hunger, abdominal pain, or stools that are bloody or black. (Black stools suggest bleeding.)

## To reduce the risk of having problems taking aspirin:

- Take “enteric-coated,” low dose, 81mg aspirin (which has a special coating that is less irritating to the stomach).
- Take aspirin with food.

Aspirin can cause more bleeding than usual after surgery or dental work (teeth cleaning does not cause this problem). Your doctor or other health care professional (such as a Care Manager) may want you to stop taking your aspirin about one week before you have surgery or dental work performed. Ask your doctor or dentist when it is safe for you to start back on your aspirin therapy.

## Can taking aspirin increase my chances of having a stroke?

Aspirin lowers your risk of stroke if you have heart disease or are at an increased risk for developing heart disease. Although most strokes are caused by a clot, some studies suggest that people who take aspirin regularly may be at slightly increased risk for having a certain type of stroke from a bleed (hemorrhagic).

## How much aspirin should I take?

The recommended amount is 81 to 325 milligrams (one low dose or adult-strength tablet) of plain or enteric-coated aspirin once a day with a meal. **Discuss taking aspirin with your health care professional.**

## How do medications (in general) 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 doctor, it's important for you to take them as directed. Don't stop taking them without consulting with your doctor first. If you are experiencing side effects, your doctor may be able to change the medication or the dosage to prevent side effects. It's likely that you may need to take this medication for the rest of your life, so work with your doctor to ensure that you are taking the right medicine and dose for you.

## 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:

- Why am I taking them?
- How often and how long should I take them?
- Are there any special instructions

for taking this particular medication? Should I only take it at mealtime? Are there activities that I should avoid while taking this medication?

- What kind of side effects could I have and what symptoms should I look for? Is there a way to avoid any side effects?

## What should I do if I have side effects?

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

## How can I remember to take my medications?

Everyone has struggled with remembering to do things that they don't regularly do. There are a number of things that can help you remember.

- Make a simple chart and post it in an obvious place where you will see it every day, like on the mirror in the bathroom.
- Set an alarm clock or watch for a reminder.
- Establish a daily routine for taking your medications, such as at bedtime, mealtime, or while at the beginning of a daily TV show.
- Use a pillbox that has seven sections, representing the days of the week.
- Record your medications on a wallet card or calendar.
- Can you think of others? \_\_\_\_\_

## Are there any special instructions I need to be aware of?

- 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 non-prescription medications, herbs, or supplements that you are taking.
- Review your medication record card regularly with your doctor or other health care professional, including your dentist.
- When you purchase any new medications, including over-the-counter medications, ask the pharmacist to check for any potential drug interactions with your current medications.
- Refill your medications at least one to two week(s) before you run out.
- If a doctor or other 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**.

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