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Understanding heart disease



Heart Care For Life Program

www.aetna.com

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More than 2,150 Americans die of heart disease each day, an average of one death every 40 seconds.¹

For additional information visit:

www.heart.org (American Heart Association)

www.nhlbi.nih.gov (National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute)

www.intelihealth.com

www.aetnapharmacy.com

Table of contents

Important facts about medication	3
Depression after a heart attack	3
Ways to reduce the risk of another heart attack	4 – 5
Guide to medicine used to treat heart patients	6 – 7
Medicine by mail	Back page

¹Go AS, Mozaffarian D, Roger V et al. Heart Disease and Stroke Statistics — 2014 Update: A Report From the American Heart Association. *Circulation Journal of the American Heart Association*. December 12, 2012. Available at: www.circ.ahajournals.org/content/127/1/e6.full.pdf+html. Accessed January 7, 2014.

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Recovering from a heart attack

Heart attacks happen when blood vessels leading to the heart get blocked with a fat-like material called plaque. This slows blood from reaching the heart. If blood is cut off for more than a few minutes, the heart can be damaged.

Almost all people who have heart attacks need medicine when they get out of the hospital. Usually, you must take your prescribed drug even when you start to feel better. Always follow your doctor's direction for taking your medicine.

Medicine to help you get better

There are four “classes” of drugs often used after a heart attack:

- Blood thinners that keep harmful blood clots from forming
- Drugs to lower cholesterol
- ACE inhibitors that lower blood pressure
- Beta-blockers that help the heart work easier and lower blood pressure

Use of beta-blockers can help prevent a second heart attack. It can also increase your chances of living a longer life by up to 40 percent.²

Your doctor will tell you how to lower the chance of having another heart attack. Exercising and eating the right foods top the list.

Your doctor may also prescribe medicine to:

- Help your heart work better with less effort
- Prevent blood clots
- Help you get better faster
- Lower your cholesterol

Talk to your doctor before you stop taking a medicine or start an exercise program

Side effects cause a lot of people to stop taking their medicine. If you have side effects, talk to your doctor. Ask what other drug and dose might be right for you.

If you have stopped taking any of your medicine, tell your doctor why.

Many people stop taking their medicine when they start to feel better, even though research proves that these drugs can help you live a longer, healthier life.³

Depression after a heart attack

More than half of all people who have had a heart attack have depression after their attack.⁴

Symptoms include:

- Trouble falling or staying asleep
- Changes in appetite or weight
- Difficulty concentrating
- Feeling worthless

Depression can keep your body from healing. It uses energy your body needs to repair damage to your heart. Depression can also cause you to lose your motivation to stick to your health plan.

The good news is that depression can be treated. Tell your doctor about any symptoms of depression.

Answer these questions:

1. Since your heart attack, have there been times when you felt down, depressed or hopeless?
2. Do you have little interest in doing things you once enjoyed?

If you answered “yes” to either question, you may have depression.

²Gottlieb SS, McCarter RJ, Vogel RA. Effect of beta-blockade on mortality among high-risk and low-risk patients after myocardial infarction. *N Engl J Med.* 1998; 339: Pages 489-97.

³Setoguchi S, Glynn RJ, Avron J, et al. Improvements in long-term mortality after myocardial infarction and increased use of cardiovascular drugs after discharge: A 10-year trend analysis. *J Am Coll Cardiol.* 2008;51:1247-54.

⁴Guck TP, Kavan MG, Elsasser GN, et al. Assessment and treatment of depression following myocardial infarction. *Am Fam Phys* 2001;4:641-8.

Ways to reduce your risk of another heart attack

Reduce your risk of having another heart attack

These steps can help:

- **Stop smoking** — A smoker increases his or her risk of developing coronary heart disease 2 to 4 times compared to a nonsmoker.⁵
- **Control your blood pressure** — Most people can control high blood pressure by eating right and exercising. However, some people have high blood pressure no matter what they do. Medicine can help treat high blood pressure. (See chart on pages 6 – 7.) Usually, when you take a drug to treat high blood pressure, you must take it for the rest of your life.
- **Lowering high cholesterol** — Cholesterol is a fat-like substance. When there is too much of it in your blood, it builds up in the walls of blood vessels. This buildup causes blood vessels to narrow. Blood flowing to the heart slows down or stops. Your doctor can tell you what your cholesterol level should be. The American Heart Association offers this advice:
 - LDL or “bad cholesterol” should be less than 100. For people at risk of a heart attack — people with diabetes, smokers and others identified by their doctor — LDL or “bad cholesterol” should be less than 70.
 - HDL or “good cholesterol” should be greater than 40.
 - Triglycerides should be less than 150.
- **Dental care** — A visit to the dentist is strongly recommended if you have any of the following:
 - Bleeding gums
 - Gums that appear to be receding
 - Persistent bad breath
 - Shifting or loose teeth
- **Eye exams** — Visit your eye doctor annually or as recommended by your eye care professional. Early signs of heart disease can be detected by optometrists or ophthalmologists during preventive eye exams. Through careful examination of the retina, your eye doctor can view small changes in the blood vessels in the back of the eye, which can indicate more serious diseases. In these exams, your doctor might just tell you something you didn't know about your heart.
- **Diet** — “ChooseMyPlate” offers dietary-based guidance from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.⁶ It encourages eating a variety of healthy foods every day. These include fruits, vegetables, whole grains, fat-free or low-fat dairy products and proteins. The guideline promotes a diet low in unhealthy fats, salt and added sugars. Visit www.choosemyplate.gov.

- **Exercise and weight control** — Physical activity helps keep your weight healthy. It also lowers “bad” cholesterol and increases “good” cholesterol. Being active can help with stress and anxiety. It can also help you feel better overall. And you don't have to do all your exercise at one time. For instance, three 10-minute walking trips can add up to the recommended 30 minutes a day.

Managing stress

Learning how to manage stress is important, especially after you've had a heart attack. There are a number of ways to reduce the amount of stress you feel, including:

- **Biofeedback** — You can learn how to control some body functions to become more relaxed. These include blood pressure and muscle tension.
- **Progressive muscle relaxation** — Find out how to reduce stress, anxiety, insomnia and certain types of pain.
- **Creative visualization** — This teaches you to make changes in the body by picturing them in your imagination.

Medicine by mail

Recovering from a heart attack is not easy. But making sure you have the medicine you need to get well is. You can order most drugs used to treat heart disease through Aetna Rx Home Delivery® mail-order pharmacy. Use this pharmacy to:

- **Get up to a 90-day supply.** Or fill the maximum supply allowed by your plan.
- **Get your medicine by mail.** It's sent to your home, doctor's office or anywhere you choose. You get free standard shipping, too. And your medicine is sent in private, secure packaging.
- **Rely on pharmacist support.** They check all prescriptions for accuracy and can answer questions any time.

Ask your doctor if Aetna Rx Home Delivery is right for you.

Here's the good news: Most people who have a heart attack go back to work and normal activities within a few months.

⁵American Heart Association. Available at: www.heart.org/HEARTORG/Conditions/HeartAttack/UnderstandYourRiskofHeartAttack/Understand-Your-Risk-of-Heart-Attack_UCM_002040_Article.jsp. Accessed December 20, 2013.

⁶U.S. Department of Agriculture. Available at: www.mypyramid.gov. Accessed December 20, 2013.



Five frequently asked questions

Q: I'm feeling fine — why should I stay on my medicine?

A: Studies show that staying on your medicine can reduce the chance that you will have another heart attack. Don't stop taking any of your medicine unless your doctor says you should.

Q: How can I make sure I will never have another heart attack?

A: There is no way to make sure that you will never have another heart attack. Continue taking your medicine. This greatly reduces the chance of another heart attack and increases the chance that you will live longer.

Q: What about side effects?

A: If you have any side effects, talk to your doctor right away. Your doctor may change your medicine or dose so that side effects go away.

Q: I haven't taken my medicine for a long time. Can I start back on them now?

A: If you stopped taking any of your medicine, talk to your doctor about why you stopped. Ask if you should start again.

Q: How do I know if I am having another heart attack?

A: If you have already had one heart attack, you may think you will recognize another one easily. But it is not always easy to tell. The symptoms are usually an uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness or pain in the center of the chest that lasts more than a few minutes. The symptoms can occur, and then go away and come back again. You may feel discomfort in other areas of the upper body, such as a pain in one or both arms, the back, neck or stomach. Finally, there are other symptoms that often accompany a heart attack. These include shortness of breath, nausea and breaking out in a cold sweat.

Medicine	How it works	How long you should take it
<p>ACE inhibitors and angiotensin receptor blockers (ARBs)</p>	<p>ACE inhibitors and ARBs protect damaged heart muscle. They lower the workload of the heart and lower blood pressure. They relax blood vessels so the heart does not need to beat with as much force.</p>	<p>Keep taking your ACE inhibitor or ARB unless your doctor tells you to stop.</p>
<p>Beta-blockers</p>	<p>Beta-blockers protect damaged heart muscle. They slow down the heart. This helps to make sure the heart gets enough oxygen, even during exercise, when the heart beats even faster.</p>	<p>Keep taking your beta-blocker unless your doctor tells you to stop.</p>
<p>Blood thinners</p>	<p>Blood thinners reduce the “stickiness” of your blood. They prevent blockages in the blood vessels that carry oxygen to your heart. One baby aspirin a day is enough for many people who have had a heart attack. Other people might need a higher dose or other medicine, too.</p>	<p>Keep taking your blood thinner unless your doctor tells you to stop.</p>
<p>Cholesterol lowering</p>	<p>Many different types of drugs reduce cholesterol. Each works in a slightly different way. Some reduce the “bad” cholesterol in your blood or increase the “good” cholesterol. Others work mainly to reduce triglycerides. Your doctor will let you know which is best for you.</p>	<p>You should continue taking your medication, even after your “goal” cholesterol levels have been met, unless your doctor tells you to stop.</p>

Side effects	Common names GENERIC		Common names BRAND	
ACE inhibitors: cough, headache, drowsiness, dizziness or lightheadedness, salty or metallic taste, decreased ability to taste, sore throat, fever, mouth sores, unusual bruising, fast heartbeat, extreme tiredness, rash, upset stomach, diarrhea, sneezing, runny nose, decrease in sexual ability	<i>benazepril</i> <i>captopril</i> <i>enalapril</i> <i>eprosartan</i> <i>fosinopril</i> <i>irbesartan</i>	<i>lisinopril</i> <i>moexipril</i> <i>perindopril</i> <i>quinapril</i> <i>ramipril</i> <i>trandolapril</i>	ACCUPRIL ACCURETIC ACEON ALTACE LOTENSIN MAVIK PRINIVIL	PRINZIDE UNIRETIC VASERETIC UNIVASC VASOTEC ZESTORETIC ZESTRIL
ARBs: dizziness, lightheadedness, congestion, cough, heartburn, diarrhea, headache, muscle aches, tiredness, back pain, fever, sore throat, runny nose, depression	<i>candesartan</i> <i>losartan</i>		ATACAND AVALIDE AVAPRO AZOR BENICAR COZAAR DIOVAN	EDARBI EXFORGE HYZAAR MICARDIS TEVETEN TRIBENZOR TWINSTA
Dizziness or lightheadedness, tiredness, headache, depression, upset stomach, dry mouth, heartburn, constipation or diarrhea, rash or itching, cold hands and feet, muscle aches, runny nose, difficulty sleeping, vision changes, cough, dry eyes, numbness, burning, tingling in the arms or legs	<i>acebutolol</i> <i>atenolol</i> <i>betaxolol</i> <i>bisoprolol</i> <i>metoprolol</i> <i>nadolol</i>	<i>pindolol</i> <i>propranolol</i> <i>propranolol SR</i> <i>sorine</i> <i>sotalol</i> <i>sotalol AF</i> <i>timolol</i>	BETAPACE BETAPACE AF BYSTOLIC CORGARD CORZIDE DUTOPROL INDERAL LA INNOPRAN XL KERLONE	LEVATOL LOPRESSOR SECTRAL TENORETIC TENORMIN TOPROL XL ZEBETA ZIAC
Stomach upset, stomach pain, unusual bleeding or bruising	<i>anagrelide</i> <i>aspirin (OTC)</i> <i>cilostazol</i> <i>clopidrogel</i>	<i>dipyridamole</i> <i>jantoven</i> <i>ticlopidine</i> <i>warfarin</i>	AGGRENOX AGRYLIN BRILINTA COUMADIN	EFFIENT PLAVIX PLETAL
A type of drug called “statins” are often used in patients with high cholesterol. Side effects of statins are constipation, muscle pain (tenderness or weakness) heartburn, headache, dizziness, difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep, depression, joint pain, cough, diarrhea, sore throat and upper respiratory infection. For the side effects of other medications, consult www.aetnapharmacy.com and choose “Find Drug Information.”	<i>atorvastatin</i> <i>cholestyramine</i> <i>colestipol</i> <i>fenofibrate</i> <i>fenofibrate delayed release</i> <i>fluvastatin</i>	<i>gemfibrozil</i> <i>lovastatin*</i> <i>pravastatin*</i> <i>prevalite</i> <i>simvastatin*</i>	ADVICOR* ALTOPREV* ANTARA COLESTID CRESTOR* FENOGLIDE FIBRICOR LESCOL LESCOL XL* LIPITOR* LIPOFEN LIVALO* LOFIBRA LOPID LOVAZA	MEVACOR* NIASPAN PRAVACHOL* QUESTRAN QUESTRAN LIGHT SIMCOR TRICOR TRIGLIDE TRILIPIX VASCEPA VYTORIN* WELCHOL ZETIA ZOCOR*

*STATINS

All generics are covered at the member’s lowest copay unless otherwise noted on Aetna’s Preferred Drug List. The Preferred Drug List is subject to change.

Coverage is not limited to drugs on Aetna’s Preferred Drug List. For a complete list of beta-blockers and other heart medications, visit www.aetna.com/formulary.

Learn more about ordering your medicine by mail

To learn more about the Aetna Rx Home Delivery mail-order pharmacy, log in to www.aetnavigators.com, your secure member website. Then click “Aetna Pharmacy” from the top of the page.

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