

# PHARMACY

Drug Information

## Medications to Treat Arrhythmia



### What is Arrhythmia?

- An arrhythmia is an abnormal heart rhythm which may be too fast, too slow or erratic. Arrhythmias affect the heart's ability to work, which may result in life-threatening situations like heart failure, stroke or sudden cardiac arrest.
- Some patients may develop symptoms like fatigue, dizziness, fainting or near-faint, rapid or pounding heartbeat, shortness of breath, chest pain, or even collapse in extreme cases.

### What is the Medication Used for?

- Medications to treat arrhythmia can slow down the heart rate or to restore an abnormal rhythm to a normal, steady rhythm.

### What are the Medications for Arrhythmia and the Side Effects?

Medications and how They Work	Common Side Effects	Management and Advice
Beta Blockers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Atenolol</i></li> <li>• <i>Bisoprolol</i></li> <li>• <i>Carvedilol</i></li> <li>• <i>Metoprolol</i></li> <li>• <i>Propranolol</i></li> </ul> <u>How do they work</u> Slows down the heart rate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tiredness</li> <li>• Dizziness</li> <li>• Cold hands and feet</li> <li>• Shortness of breath or wheezing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some side effects may get better with time</li> <li>• Rise slowly from sitting or lying position to minimise dizziness</li> <li>• Seek medical attention immediately if you have:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Persistent shortness of breath or dizziness</li> <li>○ Chest pain</li> <li>○ A sudden weight gain, shortness of breath, reduced effort tolerance or swelling in the legs/ankles</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>** Note: take Antacids that have Aluminum or Magnesium components 2 hours after taking Sotalol</p>
Sotalol  <u>How does it work</u> Slows down the heart rate; restores and maintains normal heart rhythm		

Medications and how They Work	Common Side Effects	Management and Advice
Calcium Channel Blockers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Verapamil</i></li> <li>• <i>Diltiazem</i></li> </ul> <u>How do they work</u> Slow down the heart rate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Headache</li> <li>• Constipation</li> <li>• Dizziness, fatigue</li> <li>• Swelling of lower legs/feet</li> <li>• Flushing</li> <li>• Gum overgrowth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Laxatives may be used for constipation</li> <li>• Painkillers may be used for headache</li> <li>• Rise slowly from sitting or lying position to minimise dizziness</li> <li>• Seek medical attention immediately if you have:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Persistent dizziness</li> <li>○ A sudden weight gain, shortness of breath or swelling in the legs</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Flecainide Propafenone <u>How do they work</u> Restore and maintain normal heart rhythm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nausea, vomiting</li> <li>• Dizziness, headache</li> <li>• Visual disturbances (light flashes, blurred vision)</li> <li>• Taste disturbances (Propafenone)</li> <li>• Shortness of breath</li> <li>• Chest pain</li> <li>• Persistent fever/mouth ulcers (Propafenone)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take after meals to minimise nausea</li> <li>• Avoid tasks which require concentration if you are dizzy or having blurred vision</li> <li>• Seek medical attention immediately if you have:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Persistent dizziness</li> <li>○ Visual disturbances</li> <li>○ Shortness of breath</li> <li>○ Chest pain</li> <li>○ Persistent fever/mouth ulcers</li> <li>○ Sudden weight gain, shortness of breath, reduced effort tolerance or swelling in the legs/ankles</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>** Note: As milk may interfere with the absorption of Flecainide, update your doctor if you are changing your milk intake</p>

Medications and how They Work	Common Side Effects	Management and Advice
Amiodarone <u>How does it work</u> Restores and maintains normal heart rhythm	Eye <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Blurred or decreased vision</li> </ul>	Annual eye examination is recommended. Inform your doctor immediately if these symptoms occur.
	Heart <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dizziness</li> <li>• Chest tightness</li> </ul>	Inform your doctor immediately if these symptoms occur.
	Digestive tract <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nausea, vomiting</li> <li>• Taste impairment</li> </ul>	Inform your doctor if these symptoms occur.
	Liver <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Abdominal pain or swelling</li> <li>• Weight loss</li> <li>• Yellowing of skin or eye white</li> <li>• Dark-coloured urine</li> </ul>	Inform your doctor immediately if these symptoms occur.  Your doctor will monitor your liver function before and during therapy.
	Lung <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Persistent cough, wheezing</li> <li>• Shortness of breath</li> <li>• Chest pain</li> <li>• Bloody sputum</li> </ul>	Inform your doctor immediately if these symptoms occur.
	Thyroid Symptoms of increased thyroid activity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weight loss</li> <li>• Anxiety, tremor</li> <li>• Heat intolerance</li> </ul> Symptoms of decreased thyroid activity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cold intolerance</li> <li>• Lethargy</li> <li>• Slow heart rate</li> <li>• Weight gain</li> </ul>	Inform your doctor immediately if these symptoms occur.  Your doctor will monitor your thyroid function before and during therapy.

Medications and how They Work	Common Side Effects	Management and Advice
Amiodarone (continued)	Nervous System <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Numbness, tingling or pain sensation at arms and feet</li> </ul>	Inform your doctor if these symptoms occur.
	Skin <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Get sun-burnt easily (tingling, burning, redness of exposed skin)</li> <li>Severe: Skin Blisters</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stay out of direct sunlight between 10am and 3pm if possible</li> <li>Wear protective clothing or sunglasses.</li> <li>Apply sunblock when necessary</li> <li>Avoid sun-tanning</li> </ul>
Digoxin <u>How does it work</u> Slows down the heart rate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dizziness, headache</li> <li>Stomach discomfort</li> <li>Symptoms of digoxin toxicity include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nausea, vomiting</li> <li>Diarrhea</li> <li>Visual changes (blurred vision, seeing bright spots or yellow vision)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Take after meals to minimise nausea and stomach discomfort</li> <li>Seek medical attention immediately if you have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Persistent vomiting</li> <li>Severe diarrhea</li> <li>Visual changes</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

If you develop rashes, facial swelling or shortness of breath after taking the medication, you could be allergic to the medication. Please seek medical attention immediately.

### What is the “Pill-in-the-Pocket” Therapy?

- Pill-in-the-pocket therapy is a treatment protocol where you take an antiarrhythmic drug when needed instead taking it every day.
- Some of the medications may be given in this manner as instructed by your doctor. Take the medication when you can feel that your heart is beating very fast.
- Go to the emergency department immediately if you experience:
  - Shortness of breath, chest pain
  - Loss of consciousness
  - Symptoms persist for 8 hours after taking the pill

### Are There any Other Medications Used in Arrhythmia?

- For patients with atrial fibrillation, your doctor may prescribe you a blood thinning medicine to prevent blood clot formation and reduce the risk of stroke.

### How are the Medications Taken?

- Do not stop taking the medications.
- If you miss a dose, take the missed dose as soon as you remember. If it is almost time for your next dose, take only the usual dose. Do not double the dosage.

### Can the Medications be Taken With Other Medications?

- Avoid use of grapefruit juice with Amiodarone.
- Please inform your doctor or pharmacist if you are taking other medications, including supplements, traditional or herbal remedies.

### Are There any Special Precautions That I Need to Take?

- It is important to inform your doctor if you intend to conceive or breastfeed while taking this medication.

### How Do I Store These Medications?

- Store your medication in a cool, dry place away from heat, moisture and direct sunlight.

If you have any problem with your treatment, please contact your doctor, pharmacist or nurse clinician.

Please keep all medications out of reach of children.

