Reviewed on: November 4, 2025

Medications for Heart Failure with Reduced Ejection Fraction (EF)

What is the most effective treatment for heart failure with reduced EF?

- Taking the right medications as soon as possible after your diagnosis can help you live longer, feel better, do more, and stay out of hospital.
- The most effective treatment is a set of four medications that work together:

ACE-inhibitor/ARB/ARNI
e.g. ramipril, perindopril, candesartan, sacubitril/valsartan (Entresto®)

Beta Blocker
e.g. bisoprolol, carvedilol, metoprolol

MRA
e.g. spironolactone, eplerenone

SGLT2 Inhibitor
e.g. dapagliflozin, empagliflozin (Jardiance®)

- These medications work as a team to slow down your heart rate, relax the blood vessels to reduce the workload on your heart, and prevent stiffening or scarring of the heart tissue. They can also help your heart pump better, improve your EF, and protect your kidneys.
- Some people with this condition also take a diuretic, or “water pill.”

What should you expect when you start taking these medications?

- You will start with low doses. Your health care provider will increase your medications based on your heart failure symptoms, any medication side effects, and your blood test results.
- You may feel some improvement in your heart failure symptoms about a month after you start taking these medications.
- It usually takes about three months to get to the right dose for you. Most people need to keep taking these medications for life, even if their EF improves.
- Serious side effects are rare. Some people feel mild side effects like lightheadedness, dizziness, and/or low energy after dose changes.

How can you get the most benefit from these medications?

- **Do your best to get blood tests done on time.** You'll need more blood tests during the first three to six months of taking these medications to help your health care provider adjust your doses to the right levels for you.
- **Get to know the Heart Failure Zones** (www.cardiacbc.ca/hf). You can use the Zones to help you monitor your symptoms and know when to get help.
- **Don't stop or change your medication doses on your own**. If you think you're having side effects, talk to your health care provider or pharmacist first.
- **Try a few tools to help you take your pills on the same schedule every day**. Some people use a pill organizer, blister packs, or set reminders on their phone or watch. Most pharmacies can put your medications into a blister pack.
- **Tell your health care provider about all traditional medicines, natural medicines, or over-the-counter products you are taking.** This helps your health care provider work with you to make sure all your treatments work well together and to avoid harmful side effects.
- **Keep an up-to-date list of your medications in your wallet or on your phone**. This can help you bring health care providers up to date quickly, especially if you're travelling, or in an emergency situation.

How can you get help with medication costs?

- **Fair PharmaCare** helps BC residents with the cost of prescription medications, based on income. To learn more, visit: gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/health-drug-coverage or call 1-800-663-7100
- **PharmaCare Plan W** covers prescription medications for First Nations people in BC. To learn more, visit fnha.ca/benefits/pharmacy or call 1-855-550-5454

How can you contact a pharmacist after hours?

HealthLink BC's pharmacists can provide information about medications, how they work, and side effects. They are available when your community pharmacy may be closed. Call 8-1-1 to speak with a pharmacist from 5pm-9am, 7 days per week.

Where can you learn more?

Watch the educational video series: Healthy Living with Heart Failure at www.cardiacbc.ca/hf

Scan to watch videos.

HeartLife FOUNDATION *This document was developed in collaboration with HeartLife Foundation.*

Cardiac Services BC
Provincial Health Services Authority