

Health Care Tips

Taking beta-blockers after a heart attack

What is a heart attack?^{1,2}

A heart attack occurs when blood flow to a part of your heart becomes blocked. This can happen when there is too much cholesterol and fat in your blood. If blood flow is blocked or interrupted, your heart muscle can get damaged. Over time, restricted blood flow can cause heart failure or uneven heartbeats.

What can I do to help prevent another heart attack?¹

- Eat healthy foods.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Increase your physical activity. But first, talk with your doctor.
- Monitor your blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar.
- Avoid or limit caffeine, alcohol and smoking.

What medications can I take if I've had a heart attack?^{2,3}

There are several types of medications, for example, beta-blockers, that can lower your risk for another heart attack. Beta-blockers slow your heartbeat, helping your heart relax. They can also help prevent future heart attacks by lowering your blood pressure. This makes it easier for the heart to pump blood. Beta-blockers also help to relieve chest pain.

What are the next steps?

Talk to your doctor about taking a beta-blocker. Here are some questions to ask:

- Should I be taking a beta-blocker?
- Which beta-blocker will work the best for me?
- What are the side effects of beta-blockers?

Where can I learn more?

National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute

Website: nhlbi.nih.gov

American Heart Association

Website: hearthub.org

¹Heart Attack. American Heart Association website. http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/Conditions/HeartAttack/Heart-Attack_UCM_001092_SubHomePage.jsp. Accessed April 14, 2017.

²What is a Heart Attack? National Heart Lung and Blood Institute website. <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/health-topics/topics/heartattack/>. Accessed April 14, 2017.

³O’Gara, PT, Kushner FG, Ascheim DD, et al. 2013 ACCF/AHA Guideline for the Management of ST-Elevation Myocardial Infarction: A Report of the American College of Cardiology Foundation/ American Heart Association Task Force on Practice Guidelines. *Circulation*. 2013;127:e362–e425; originally published online December 17, 2012.

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