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**ACE Inhibitors (Angiotensin Converting Enzyme Inhibitors)**

The angiotensin converting enzyme (ACE) is an enzyme found within us that converts the protein angiotensin I into a very potent blood vessel constrictor called angiotensin II. This is part of the so-called renin-angiotensin system that the body uses to help regulate blood pressure. Compounds that inhibit angiotensin converting enzyme have been discovered and developed. This is a very useful class of drugs in the treatment of high blood pressure and congestive heart failure.

**Hypertension**

High blood pressure (hypertension) is the most common condition for which the ACE inhibitors are used. The drugs may be used alone or in combination with other drugs, depending upon the severity of the hypertension and its response to therapy. ACE inhibitors are particularly useful in the treatment of hypertension in diabetics in that some of the kidney damage that occurs in diabetics may be prevented by this class of drugs.

**Congestive Heart Failure**

Congestive heart failure (CHF) develops when the pumping ability of the heart is significantly compromised. This can occur in the setting of coronary artery disease, heart valve disease or weakened heart muscle (cardiomyopathy). The ACE inhibitors have been found to be useful in CHF by improving the function of the pump. This can lead to fewer symptoms such as shortness of breath and improved survival. The ACE inhibitors cause blood vessel dilation and the resistance against which the heart pumps is reduced. This leads to more efficient heart function. Following a heart attack, ACE inhibitors have been shown to be effective in limiting the changes in the shape of the heart pumping chamber that are commonly seen. This is termed "remodelling" and preventing this leads to improved heart function over time.

**Possible Side Effects**

Dizziness, headache, diarrhea, constipation, loss of appetite, nausea, loss of taste, flushing or fatigue may occur the first several days as your body adjusts to the medication.

To avoid dizziness and lightheadedness when rising from a seated or lying position, get up slowly. Also limit your intake of alcoholic beverages and avoid overheating which will aggravate these effects.

Inform your doctor if you develop chest pain, difficulty breathing, skin rash, tingling of the hands or feet, or yellowing of the skin or eyes while taking this medication.

This medication can increase sensitivity to sunlight.

**PRECAUTIONS:**

This medication has been known to cause fetal injury and possibly death when used during the second and third trimesters. If pregnancy is suspected, stop taking the drug immediately and notify your doctor. Since this drug appears in breast milk breast-feeding is not recommended.

This medicine may make you more prone to sunburn. Wear protective clothing and a sunscreen.

Limit your intake of alcohol and avoid overheating because this can aggravate dizziness and lightheadedness.

Be sure your doctor or dentist knows your complete medical history especially if you are planning to undergo any medical or dental procedures.

Avoid "stimulant" drugs that may increase your heart rate such as decongestants or caffeine. Decongestants are commonly found in over-the-counter cough and cold medicine.

**DRUG INTERACTIONS:** Inform your doctor about all the medicine you use (both prescription and nonprescription) especially if you take lithium, potassium supplements, potassium sparing water pills or anti-inflammatory medicine (NSAID or Motrin-like drugs) because you may need to be monitored more closely.

**NOTES:** It is important to have your blood pressure checked regularly while taking this medication. Learn how to monitor your blood pressure. Discuss this with your doctor.

**MISSED DOSE:** If you miss a dose, take it as soon as remembered; do not take if it is almost time for the next dose, instead, skip the missed dose and resume your usual dosing schedule. Do not "double-up" the dose to catch up.