

CALCIUM-CHANNEL BLOCKERS

A guide for stroke patients

The information in this leaflet is intended for general guidance. If your doctor has given you different advice, follow those instructions.

What are Calcium-channel blockers?

Calcium-channel blockers are medicines used to treat high blood pressure. They are also used to prevent and/or treat angina. Some may be used to slow the heart rate.

Names

Examples of calcium-channel blockers are AMLODIPINE (*Istin*[®]), DILTIAZEM (*Adizem*[®], *Slozem*[®], *Tildiem*[®], *Viazem*[®]), FELODIPINE (*Felotens*[®], *Plendil*[®]), LACIDIPINE (*Motens*[®]), LERCANIDIPINE (*Zanidip*[®]), NICARDIPINE (*Cardene*[®]), NIFEDIPINE (*Adalat*[®], *Coracten*[®]) and VERAPAMIL (*Securon*[®]).

What are calcium-channel blockers for?

Calcium-channel blockers are a type of antihypertensive. Antihypertensives are medicines used to lower blood pressure.

If you have had a stroke or a mini-stroke, taking antihypertensives can reduce your chances of having another one. Many medicines can lower blood pressure. They all work in slightly different ways. You may need more than one medicine to bring your blood pressure down.

How do they work?

Calcium-channel blockers keep the blood vessels relaxed and open, making it easier for blood to flow through them. This lowers your blood pressure.

How should I take the medication?

Swallow whole the number of tablets or capsules prescribed with a glass of water. If you find it difficult to swallow your medication, speak to your doctor or pharmacist. If you have been prescribed AMLODIPINE, FELODIPINE, LACIDIPINE, LERCANIDIPINE, NICARDIPINE, NIFEDIPINE or VERAPAMIL you should avoid drinking grapefruit juice or eating grapefruit.

How will I know if the tablets are working?

You may not notice anything different.

How long will I have to take the tablets for?

Probably for many years. Do not stop taking them unless your doctor tells you to do so.

What if I forget a dose?

Take it as soon as you remember. If it is nearly time for the next dose, miss out the one you forgot. DO NOT double up the dose.

Are there any side effects?

Most medicines can cause side effects. Calcium channel blockers may cause headaches, dizziness, swollen ankles (fluid can build up in your legs) and flushing (going red in the face). If any of these effects become troublesome, consult your doctor.

Can I have other medicines?

There are some medicines that interact with calcium-channel blockers. These include other medicines used to lower blood pressure and theophylline. Always check with your doctor or pharmacist before taking any new medicines or herbal products.

Can I drink alcohol?

Alcohol intake should be kept to a minimum. If in doubt, you should ask your doctor.

How do I find out more?

The information in this leaflet is limited. If you would like more information, see the patient information leaflet provided with your medication. You can also ask your doctor or pharmacist for further information.

For further information phone:

01603 286 286 and ask for the '*Pharmacy Helpline*' between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday to Friday.

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