

Title: Beta Blockers: A Guide for Patients

Author: Emily Sharpe

Date: July 15, 2009

Key words: beta blocker, hypertension, surgery, stroke, myocardial infarction

Abstract:

In patients who are at risk for heart disease, beta blockers started during surgery prevented heart attack but increased the risk of stroke and death. The current guidelines that recommend the initiation of beta-blocker therapy in patients having noncardiac surgery should be reevaluated. However, patients who have been treated with beta blockers for a long time should continue their medication throughout the perioperative period.

This document was created by a medical student enrolled in the Primary Care Clerkship at the University of Minnesota Medical School as part of the course project. The aim of the project is to present information on a medical topic in the format of a patient education handout. It does not necessarily reflect the views of the University of Minnesota Medical School physicians and faculty. These materials are provided for informational purposes only and are in no way intended to take the place of the advice and recommendations of your personal health care provider. The information provided may no longer be up to date since it has not been reviewed since the date of creation. The information provided should not be used to diagnose a health problem or disease, or as a means of determining treatment. In the event of a medical emergency, immediately contact a doctor or call 911.

Examples of Beta Blockers

There are many different types of beta blockers including:

- Atenolol (Tenormin)
- Bisoprolol (Zebeta)
- Carvedilol (Coreg)
- Metoprolol (Lopressor, Toprol XL)
- Propranolol (Inderal LA)
- Timolol (Blocadren)

The best one for you depends on your condition and health.

For More Information on Beta Blockers:

- Talk with your doctor
- Visit these websites:
 - <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/medlineplus.html>
 - <http://www.webmd.com/>
 - <http://familydoctor.org>

Emily Sharpe, MS4

Beta Blockers

A Guide for Patients

University of Minnesota

Family Medicine Clerkship

Patient Education Tool



What is a Beta Blocker?

Beta blockers are a type of medicine your doctor may have prescribed to lower your high blood pressure. They are also used to treat a variety of conditions, such as irregular heart rhythm, glaucoma, and migraine headaches.



How Do Beta Blockers Work?

Beta blockers work by stopping the effects of the hormone epinephrine, also known as adrenaline. Epinephrine makes the heart beat faster. By blocking epinephrine, beta blockers help the heart beat slower and with less force. This will in turn lower blood pressure. They also help improve blood flow in the blood vessels.

Common Side Effects:

- Dizziness
- Weakness
- Difficulty falling asleep
- Fatigue
- Cold hands and feet
- May worsen symptoms of asthma
- May worsen blood vessel disease
- May hide symptoms of low blood sugar
- May cause the heart to beat too slow

Heart disease and chest pain may get worse if you suddenly stop taking beta blockers. Talk with your doctor before stopping any medications.

Beta Blockers & Surgery:

[What you need to know]

If you have been prescribed a beta blocker by your doctor, you should take it before surgery, as you normally would. You will be told to not eat or drink anything after midnight the night before surgery, but it is okay to take your medicine with sips of water.

Do not start taking a beta blocker before surgery without talking with your doctor.



TIP:

Talk with your surgeon or anesthesiologist before surgery to confirm which medications you need to take.