

Atenolol

Why is this medication prescribed?

This medication is a beta-blocker used to treat chest pain (angina) and high blood pressure. It is also used after an acute heart attack to improve survival. High blood pressure reduction helps prevent strokes, heart attacks and kidney problems.

This drug works by blocking the action of certain natural chemicals in your body such as epinephrine on the heart and blood vessels. This results in a lowering of the heart rate, blood pressure, and strain on the heart.

How should this medicine be used?

Take this medication by mouth, usually once daily or as directed by your doctor. Use this medication regularly in order to get the most benefit from it. To help you remember, use it at the same time each day.

This drug is not effective if you use it only when chest pain or a migraine headache occurs. It is very important to take this medication regularly as prescribed to help prevent these conditions.

The dosage is based on your medical condition and response to therapy. It may take one or two weeks before the full benefit of this drug takes effect. It is important to continue taking this medication even if you feel well. Most people with high blood pressure do not feel sick.

Other uses for this medicine

This medication may also be used for irregular heartbeats, heart failure, migraine headache prevention, tremors and other conditions as determined by your doctor.

What special precautions should I follow?

Before taking atenolol, tell your doctor or pharmacist if you are allergic to it; or to other beta-blockers (e.g., metoprolol, propranolol) ; or if you have any other allergies.

This medication should not be used if you have certain medical conditions. Before using this medicine, consult your doctor or pharmacist if you have: certain types of irregular heartbeats (e.g., sinus bradycardia, second or third degree atrioventricular block), cardiogenic shock, severe heart failure (overt or decompensated type), a certain type of tumor (untreated pheochromocytoma).

Before using this medication, tell your doctor or pharmacist your medical history, especially of: heart failure (treated, compensated type), breathing problems (e.g., asthma, chronic obstructive lung disease), diabetes, overactive thyroid disease (hyperthyroidism), kidney disease, blood circulation problems (e.g., Raynaud's disease), mental/mood disorders (e.g., depression), certain muscle disease (myasthenia gravis).

Before having surgery, tell your doctor or dentist that you are taking this medication.

If you have diabetes, this medication may mask the fast/pounding heartbeat you would usually feel when your blood sugar level falls too low (hypoglycemia). Other symptoms of a low blood sugar level such as dizziness or sweating are unaffected by this drug.

This drug may make you dizzy or drowsy; use caution engaging in activities requiring alertness such as driving or using machinery. Limit alcoholic beverages.

To minimize dizziness and lightheadedness, get up slowly when rising from a seated or lying position.

FDA pregnancy category D. This medication can cause harm to an unborn baby. Do not use atenolol if you are pregnant. Tell your doctor if you become pregnant during treatment. Use an effective form of birth control while you are using this medication.

This drug passes into breast milk and may have undesirable effects on a nursing infant

What special dietary instructions should I follow?

Atenolol is only part of a complete program of treatment for hypertension that may also include diet, exercise, and weight control. Follow your diet, medication, and exercise routines very closely if you are being treated for hypertension.

What should I do if I forget a dose?

If you miss a dose, take it as soon as you remember, but not if it is within 8 hours of the next dose. If it is within 8 hours of the next dose, skip the missed dose and resume your usual dosing schedule. Do not double the dose to catch up.

What side effects can this medication cause?

Get emergency medical help if you have any of these signs of an allergic reaction: hives; difficulty breathing; swelling of your face, lips, tongue, or throat.

Call your doctor at once if you have any of these serious side effects.

- slow or uneven heartbeats;
- feeling light-headed, fainting;
- feeling short of breath, even with mild exertion;

- swelling of your ankles or feet;
- nausea, stomach pain, low fever, loss of appetite, dark urine, clay-colored stools, jaundice (yellowing of the skin or eyes);
- depression; or
- cold feeling in your hands and feet.

Other less serious side effects are more likely to occur, such as:

- decreased sex drive, impotence, or difficulty having an orgasm;
- sleep problems (insomnia);
- tired feeling; or
- anxiety, nervousness.

What storage conditions are needed for this medicine?

Store at room temperature between between 20 and 25 degrees C away from light and moisture

In case of emergency/overdose

If overdose is suspected, contact your local poison control center or emergency room immediately.

What other information should I know?

Do not stop taking atenolol without first talking to your doctor. Stopping suddenly may make your condition worse.

If you need to have any type of surgery, you may need to temporarily stop using atenolol. Be sure the surgeon knows ahead of time that you are using atenolol.

Avoid drinking alcohol, which could increase drowsiness and dizziness while you are taking atenolol.

Hypertension often has no symptoms, so you may not even feel that you have high blood pressure. Continue using this medicine as directed, even if you feel well. You may need to use blood pressure medication for the rest of your life.