

Diuretics

Examples:

- Furosemide (Lasix)
- Metolazone (Zaroxlyn)
- Hydrochlorothiazide

What do they do?:

Diuretics are used to treat fluid overload associated with heart failure. Removal of excess fluid in the body will help to relieve shortness of breath and ankle/leg swelling. The dose of your diuretic will be adjusted to keep you fluid-free. Your body weight associated with this fluid-free state is called your “dry weight”. It is important that you weigh yourself every morning using the same scale and record your weight. This record of your weights should be shown to your physician every time you go for follow-up – this will help your physician to adjust your diuretic dose. Contact your physician if your weight increases by at least 2 pounds over 1 day or by at least 5 pounds over a week, or if you notice worsening shortness of breath or ankle/leg swelling.

How do they work?:

Diuretics cause your kidneys to eliminate more salt and water in your urine. The amount of urine you produce and the number times you go to the washroom increase causing your body to lose excess fluid.

What are their common side effects?:

Low blood pressure – Diuretics have a blood pressure lowering effect. When you first start the drug or your dose is increased, you may feel some lightheadedness or dizziness for the first few days, but this should go away with time. You can reduce symptoms by taking your heart failure medications at different times of the day. If you feel dizzy/lightheaded when getting out of bed, sit at the edge of the bed for a few minutes until the symptoms go away and then try standing up. Contact your physician if you are dizzy for more than 5-10 minutes after you stand up, or are so dizzy that you can not walk, or if you have fainted.

Kidney and electrolyte abnormalities - These abnormalities are detected with blood tests. Your physician will be monitoring for these abnormalities.