



Patient & Family Guide  
2025

# Diuretics



[www.nshealth.ca](http://www.nshealth.ca)

# Diuretics

My medication: \_\_\_\_\_

## Why do I need this medication?

- Diuretics are also called **fluid pills** or **water pills**. They help lower symptoms caused by heart, kidney, or liver disease.
  - › For example, fluid retention (swelling) and high blood pressure.

## How does this medication work?

- Diuretics help your body get rid of extra water and salt by making you pee more. This lowers swelling and makes it easier for your heart to pump blood.
- There are 2 types of diuretics:
  - Type 1:** While taking this medication, eat or drink foods that have higher levels of potassium to prevent potassium loss.
    - › Symptoms of low potassium include muscle cramps and severe (very bad) weakness. Talk to your primary health care provider (family doctor or nurse practitioner) about this.
  - Type 2:** While taking this medication, avoid food and drinks that are high in potassium and salt substitutes, like processed foods. Talk to your primary health care provider about this.

## Examples:

- › Furosemide (Lasix®)
- › Hydrochlorothiazide (Hydrodiuril®)
- › Hydrochlorothiazide/amiloride (Moduret®)
- › Hydrochlorothiazide/triamterene (Dyazide®)
- › Metolazone (Zaroxolyn®)
- › Spironolactone (Aldactone®)

## How do I take this medication?

- Take this medication exactly as your primary health care provider tells you. Even if you feel fine, your blood pressure may still be high.
- This medication makes you pee more. Take it early in the morning so you do not have to get up as often at night.
- If you take it 2 times a day, take the 2<sup>nd</sup> dose in the afternoon (about 6 hours after your 1<sup>st</sup> dose).
- Keep your medication at room temperature (15 to 30 °C) away from heat, moisture, and direct light.
- **Do not** keep it in the bathroom.
- Keep all medication out of the reach of children and pets.

## What if I miss a dose?

- Take the missed dose as soon as you remember.
- Skip the missed dose if it is almost time for your next dose.
- **Do not** take 2 doses at the same time.

## Warnings

- It is important to talk to your primary health care provider before taking any other new medications or over-the-counter products.
- Tell your health care provider if you are taking any of these medications:
  - › Lithium
  - › Cortisone medications (like prednisone)
  - › Digoxin (Lanoxin®)
  - › Warfarin
  - › Cholestyramine resin (Questran®)
  - › Other diuretics or medications to treat blood pressure, insulin, or oral (by mouth) medication to control diabetes
- Tell your health care provider if you are pregnant or breastfeeding/chestfeeding.

- Tell your health care provider if you have:
  - › Gout
  - › Pancreatitis
  - › Liver or kidney disease
  - › Diabetes
  - › Lupus
- This medication may raise your blood sugar levels. If you have diabetes, you will need to check your blood sugar levels more closely. Your insulin or medication may need to be adjusted.
- This medication can make your skin more sensitive to the sun. Wear sunglasses, sunscreen with SPF 30 or higher, protective clothes (long-sleeved shirt and pants), and a hat when you go outside.
- This medication can make you dizzy. Get up slowly when you go from sitting to standing, and from lying to sitting up.
- **Avoid alcohol** while taking this medication as you may become dehydrated (not drinking enough fluid).

**Call your primary health care provider or go to nearest Emergency Department right away if you have:**

- › An irregular heartbeat
- › Wheezing or trouble breathing
- › Itching, hives, or a rash
- › Muscle weakness, pain, or cramps
- › Pain while peeing
- › Trouble peeing

**If you have these less serious side effects, talk to your primary health care provider or pharmacist:**

- › Constipation (not able to poop)
- › Diarrhea (loose, watery poop)
- › Dizziness
- › Drowsiness
- › Headache
- › Loss of appetite
- › Trouble having sex
- › Nausea (feeling sick to your stomach)

**If you have other side effects that you think are caused by this medication, tell your primary health care provider or your pharmacist.**

# Notes:

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This pamphlet is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice or professional judgment of a health care provider. The information may not apply to all situations. If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

Find all patient education resources here:  
[www.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources](http://www.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources)

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time:  
Call 811 or visit: <https://811.novascotia.ca>

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