

Medications useful in treating vascular disease



Second In A Series

Vascular disease is a complex disease that affects the blood vessels, including those vessels to the heart, brain and lower extremities. Examples of vascular disease include Coronary Artery Disease (CAD), stroke and peripheral vascular disease. Coronary artery disease is still the leading cause of hospitalizations and death in the world, affecting over 13 million people annually. This disease occurs when there is reduced or absent blood flow to the arteries supplying the heart. There are many ways to prevent vascular disease. However, once a person is diagnosed, there are several medications which can be helpful to keep the patient healthy and hopefully prevent further complication.



Ask The Doctor
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Aspirin

Aspirin is an antiplatelet medication. Platelets help the blood to clot. Aspirin is useful in patients with vascular disease because it prevents the platelets from sticking together, thereby preventing blood clots from forming inside of the arteries. The dose of aspirin varies from 81mg to 325mg. Generally, the lower dose is initially used and may be increased depending on the severity of the disease.

Plavix

This medication works similar to aspirin by helping to keep platelets from clumping together and forming clots. Use of this medicine prevents future clots and can be used in those patients allergic to aspirin.

Beta-blockers

Lowering the blood pressure is very important in patients with vascular disease. A group of blood pressure lowering medications called beta blockers allows the heart to beat more efficiently. While lowering the blood pressure, these medications also lower the resting pulse rate and allow the heart to beat less vigorously. This decreases the heart's demand for oxygen and allows more time for the heart to fill with blood and then circulate to the rest of the body. Beta blockers also may help with patients suffering from chest pain. Examples include Metoprolol and Atenolol.

Ace-inhibitors

These medications are also great at lowering the blood pressure. In addition, they are helpful in patients with vascular disease because they help prevent the progression of further disease by remodeling damaged tissue and prolonging the patient's life. Examples include Lisinopril and Benazopril.

Calcium channel blockers

This group of medications can be used if a patient cannot tolerate the beta blockers. They work by also lowering the blood pressure and help to relax the muscles surrounding the coronary arteries. This action helps to open the vessels wider and allow an increased flow of blood to the heart. Examples include Amlodipine and Felodipine.

Cholesterol lowering agents

Lowering cholesterol is also a key factor in preventing vascular disease. The use of most notably statins, a group of cholesterol lowering agents, makes this possible by decreasing the low density lipoprotein levels (LDL) or "bad" cholesterol in the blood. The LDL is what causes plaque buildup in coronary arteries. The use of statins (i.e., Lovastatin, Simvastatin, etc.) helps to decrease cardiovascular events and deaths from vascular disease, thereby improving survival.

Beef Stew is nutritious and delicious

What's for dinner tonight? That's usually the dilemma during the drive home. Health officials say that beef, herbs and vegetables make a tasty nutritious dish. Here is an easy and healthful recipe:

1 Tbsp. olive oil
1/2 lb. beef stew meat, cut into 1-inch cubes
1 large onion, diced
2 medium carrots, sliced
1 cup diced leeks
3 garlic cloves, chopped
1 can (14 oz.) diced tomatoes
1 can (6 oz.) tomato paste
1 can (14 oz.) fat-free beef broth
1-2 Tbsp. dried oregano
1 cup water
2 medium potatoes, cubed
1 package (10 oz.) frozen green beans
1 cup chopped kale
Salt and black pepper, to taste



In large nonstick pot, heat oil over medium-high heat. Add beef, sauté until brown, about 5 minutes. Remove from pot and set aside.

In same pot, sauté onion, carrots, leeks and garlic, 5 minutes. Return beef to pot. Add tomatoes, tomato paste, broth

and oregano. Add water; bring to boil. Reduce heat to low; simmer until beef is nearly tender, about 50 minutes. Add potatoes. Cover partially; simmer until beef and potatoes are tender.

Add green beans and kale. Cook another 6-8 minutes. Season with salt and pepper.

Source: American Institute for Cancer Research

Nitroglycerin

This medication aids in patients with acute and chronic chest pain. It works by dilating or opening up the arteries, which helps to reduce the heart's demand for blood.

All of these medications are not right for everyone

and have possible side effects depending on the patient's other medical problems. These medications should also be used in combination with a healthy lifestyle. The patient should use all medicines as directed and should be monitored frequently by a physician.