



Diuretics

Heart medicine
for your child

What is a diuretic?

A diuretic, also called a water pill, is a type of medicine that helps the body get rid of salt (sodium) and water. For children with heart conditions, it reduces blood pressure and gets rid of extra water in the body.

Some diuretics cause a loss of electrolytes, which are minerals in the blood like sodium and potassium. Other medicines can help return the important minerals that your child needs.

What are the types of diuretics?

Diuretics are grouped by their strength — mild, moderate or strong. Your child may be on one or multiple diuretics depending on the heart condition. The most common are:

- Mild diuretics: Diuril (chlorothiazide), Hydrodiuril (hydrochlorothiazide), Aldactone (spironalactone)
- Moderate diuretics: Lasix (furosemide)
- Strong diuretics: Edecrin (ethacrinic acid), Zaroxolyn/Diulo (metolazone)

How do I give the diuretic to my child?

- Give it as prescribed by your doctor.
- Give the diuretic at the same time every day.
- The medicine works best when a certain level is in your child's blood at all times. This happens when the doses are spaced apart in equal amounts of time.
- If your child takes it 2 times a day and the nighttime dose is making them wake up to go to the bathroom, you can give it at breakfast and late afternoon (4 to 5 p.m.).
- It begins to work about 1 to 2 hours after taking it.
- It comes in liquid or pill form.

What if we miss or forget a dose?

If your child takes it 3 or 4 times a day:

- Skip the dose you forgot and resume the regular schedule.
- **Do not** try to catch up or give 2 doses at the same time.

If your child takes it 2 times a day:

- If you missed the morning dose:
 - If you remember the morning dose **before 12 noon**, give the dose when you remember and stay on the regular schedule.
- If you missed the evening dose:

To Learn More

- Children's Heart Center
206-987-2015
- After hours and on weekends (hospital operator)
206-987-0000
- Pediatric Cardiology of Alaska
907-212-3655
- Ask your child's nurse or doctor
- www.seattlechildrens.org

Free Interpreter Services

- In the hospital, ask your child's nurse.
- From outside the hospital, call the toll-free Family Interpreting Line 1-866-583-1527. Tell the interpreter the name or extension you need.
- For Deaf and hard of hearing callers
206-987-2280 (TTY).

- If you remember the evening dose **before 12 midnight**, give the dose when you remember and stay on the regular schedule.

If you miss more than 2 doses in a row, call your child's healthcare provider or the Heart Center.

What if my child throws up after taking the medication?

- If you think your child could be sick with vomiting and/or diarrhea, please call your child's doctor for more advice about whether to continue giving the diuretics. Your child may get dehydrated if they continue to take the diuretics.
- If your child throws up immediately after taking the diuretic and you do not think your child is sick with anything else, go ahead and give the dose again. Give the next dose at the regular time.
- If your child throws up more than 5 minutes after taking the diuretic, **do not give the dose again right away**. If you do not think your child is sick with anything else, give the next dose at the regular time.

What if I run out of medicine?

Call your pharmacy when you are close to running out of medicine. Your pharmacy will contact us about refills. The clinic visit is the best time to make sure your child is getting the right dose and has enough medicine.

When do I call my doctor?

Since diuretics help the body get rid of extra water, your child is at risk for dehydration, especially if your child gets sick with something else. Call your child's doctor if your child has any of these problems:

- Infants: eating poorly or less than 4 to 5 diapers in 24 hours
- Sunken eyes (a sign of dehydration)
- Small amount of urine when peeing
- Not drinking fluids as much as usual, especially during warm weather
- Tiredness or irritability
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea

If you miss more than 2 doses in a row, call your child's healthcare provider or the Heart Center.

Remember:

- **Bring a list of your child's medicines to each clinic appointment.**
- **Keep all medicines out of the reach of children.**

Seattle Children's offers interpreter services for Deaf, hard of hearing or non-English speaking patients, family members and legal representatives free of charge. Seattle Children's will make this information available in alternate formats upon request. Call the Family Resource Center at 206-987-2201.

This handout has been reviewed by clinical staff at Seattle Children's. However, your child's needs are unique. Before you act or rely upon this information, please talk with your child's healthcare provider.

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