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YOU AND YOUR TREATMENT: STARTING ON YOUR COMBINATION BLOOD PRESSURE-LOWERING MEDICATION: TARKA

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WHAT IS THIS PILL FOR?

This is a combination of two blood pressure-lowering drugs, which will improve your blood pressure control. It contains an ACE inhibitor (ACEI) and a calcium-channel blocker (CCB). ACE inhibitors protect the heart and the blood vessels. They work on your kidneys to stop fluid and salt retention, both of which can put the heart and circulation under extra pressure. ACE inhibitors also lower your blood pressure by relaxing the blood vessels and this takes more stress off the heart.

They have been shown to be useful in conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure and heart failure, among others. They are often prescribed if you have any condition that puts your heart or your circulation at risk of damage.

Calcium channel blockers work by reducing the energy needs of the heart muscle and the pressure in the blood vessels. They are most often added when blood pressure cannot be controlled by only one blood pressure-lowering medicine. The two drugs combined in this one pill are easy to take and have been tested for equal effect of two pills of the same dosage.

IS THERE ANY HARM IN LOWERING MY BLOOD PRESSURE? CAN IT GO TOO LOW?

Most people agree that a low blood pressure is good for your health. It is rare for the blood pressure to go too low, but you will have regular checks to ensure that this does not happen. Once your body has adjusted to the tablets you may only need to be seen every six to 12 months or so.

WHAT DOSE SHOULD I TAKE?

The capsule is only available in 180/2 mg. Each capsule contains 180 mg sustained-release verapamil hydrochloride and 2 mg trandolapril. One capsule is to be taken orally once daily. Your doctor may want to test or monitor your kidney function prior to putting you on this medication.

WHEN SHOULD I TAKE IT?

This combination is usually taken in the morning so that it can work

during the day. Sometimes you might be advised to take your dose at bedtime. This is because the tablet can sometimes cause a swift drop in blood pressure that can make you feel light headed. You are less likely to notice this if you are in bed. However, this is quite uncommon, so for many people it is fine to take the dose every morning from the start.

HOW WILL I KNOW IT IS WORKING?

This medication is given to protect your heart rather than to treat any symptoms so you may not feel any different. However, tests have shown huge benefits for people taking ACE inhibitors and CCBs, with significant reductions in the number of heart attacks, strokes and other conditions, so it is worth continuing with them even if you can't feel any obvious benefit.

HOW LONG SHOULD I TAKE IT FOR?

ACE inhibitors and CCBs protect your heart and the blood vessels, which carry oxygen and nutrients around the rest of your body. The longer you take them, the longer this protection will last. For this reason, we usually suggest that you take them for life.

WHAT SIDE EFFECTS MIGHT I EXPECT AND HOW COMMON ARE THEY?

Side effects from this drug are surprisingly rare. However, all drugs have side effects. One well-known side effect with ACE inhibitors is a cough but some studies suggest that as few as one in 100 people taking these drugs suffer this problem. Let your doctor, nurse or pharmacist know if you develop a new and persistent cough or severe diarrhoea or vomiting causing dehydration while taking an ACE inhibitor. It is important to remember, however, that the likely benefits from ACE inhibitors are greater than the risk for the vast majority of people.

The CCB may cause dizziness if the blood pressure drops too low and headaches. There may also be some ankle swelling.

If you are using additional multivitamins you need to inform your doctor.

ANY OTHER QUESTIONS?

Talk to your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.