

- Beta blockers slow your heart rate at rest and during exercise.
- Your heart rate will likely not get as high during exercise as it did before you took this medication.
- You can use the perceived exertion scale to ensure you are exercising at the right intensity.
- Taking a beta blocker does not prevent the positive effects of exercise.

Most individuals who have had a dissection or are in the “watch and wait” period living with a thoracic aortic aneurysm take at least one medication to control blood pressure. The most common type of medication is a beta blocker. These medications typically end in “-lol”, for example, metoprolol.

All beta blockers slow your heart rate. This is true at rest as well as when exercising. If you are taking one, you might notice that when you are exercising your heart rate does not get as high as it used to before you were taking a beta blocker even when doing similar exercises.

The American Heart Association recommends at least 150 minutes per week of moderate intensity exercise. This recommendation also applies also to people with thoracic aortic aneurysms and dissections. Many people use heart rate to guide exercise intensity, but that method is not reliable when you're taking a beta blocker. A commonly used formula to estimate 100% of the maximal HR during exercise is to subtract your age from 220. However, this and similar formulas do not work well if you are taking a beta blockers. Also, with aortic disease, one does not want to reach a maximal heart rate during exercise.

Instead, you can use the **perceived exertion scale**:

- Moderate intensity: You should feel like you're working hard, but still be able to talk, with pauses. (In example, feeling like you are exerting yourself at a 5-7 on a 10 point scale).
- High intensity: If you're unable to speak in a normal conversational voice during exercise, you may be pushing too hard.

Good news:

Taking a beta blocker won't stop you from experiencing the mental and physical benefits of regular exercise. Exercise at a moderate intensity will still improve your endurance, lower your cholesterol, help keep your blood sugar in a healthy range, and reduce your risk for all cardiovascular disease.

All medications can have the potential for side effects. Most people who take a beta blocker do not have significant adverse side effects. If you have just started taking a beta you may initially feel extra tired and slow, especially during exercise. With time, you should begin to feel normal when exercising. If you have side effects related to the medication, talk with your doctor about trying other blood pressure medications. It may take some time to find the right one.

Important:

Never stop taking your blood pressure medications without talking to your doctor. Suddenly stopping this medication can be dangerous.