

Beta-blockers

Mechanism of action: Blocks effects of epinephrine on the heart. Relaxes small arteries to decrease blood pressure. Decreases force and rate of contraction of the heart

Drug names:

- Atenolol
- Bisoprolol
- Metoprolol
- Propranolol

Side effects:

- Impotence
- Insomnia
- Lethargy, weakness
- Dizziness, light-headedness
- Depression/ worsening of preexisting depression

Adverse effects:

- “passing out”
- Hypoglycemia or hyperglycemia in diabetic patients

Nursing Considerations:

- Check blood pressure and heart rate before administering. If blood pressure is less than 90/60 mmHg or if the heart rate is less than 60 bpm, do not administer the medication.
- Check blood glucose of diabetic patients (beta-blockers can mask signs of hypoglycemia)
- Continue to monitor blood pressure and heart rate after administration
- Monitor for signs of developing depression or worsening of existing depression
- Teach patients to avoid suddenly stopping beta-blockers- could increase risk of heart attack
- Monitor older adults for mental confusion or changes in level of consciousness