

Medication Information

Beta-blockers

Inderal (propranolol), **Tenormin** (atenolol)

Beta-blockers are a group of medications used to treat hypertension (high blood pressure), angina, and migraine headaches. In psychiatry, they are used to treat anxiety as well as to reduce anger, restlessness, and tremors. The daily dose range varies among the specific medications.

Precautions: These medications should be used with caution in patients with asthma. It is best to avoid any use of alcohol or street drugs when taking these medications. Because beta-blockers can produce drowsiness and dizziness, do not drive or operate heavy machinery until you know how you will be affected. If there is a possibility you may become pregnant or breast feed, consult with your physician. Drug interactions may occur with Benzodiazepines, Cardizem, Verapamil, Tagamet, Coumadin, Theophylline, and Prozac.

Common side effects include: drowsiness, dizziness, low blood pressure, slow pulse, breathing difficulty, wheezing, cough, dry mouth, nausea, nightmares, and sexual dysfunction. Other adverse effects not listed here may occur. Contact your physician if you develop any unusual or disturbing symptoms.

Alternative Treatments: Other medications used to treat anxiety include benzodiazepines, serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs), and Buspar. Certain "natural" substances have been found helpful in reducing milder anxiety. These are not as well studied, may be manufactured with less quality control than medications, can cause adverse reactions, and are usually less predictably effective than medication. They include St John's Wort, 5-HTP, GABA, L-glutamine, Valerian root, and Kava Kava. Also, various forms of psychotherapy are often beneficial. Left untreated, anxiety disorders tend to become more severe and chronic.