Protecting Your Heart After Surgery

Perioperative Beta Blockade

What is “beta blockade” and why do I need it?
Having surgery can be very stressful on your body. The stress can be greater if you are over 65 years old, have high blood pressure, any kind of heart disease, high blood sugar (diabetes) or have ever smoked cigarettes.

A special kind of medicine called Metoprolol can help lower the amount of stress your body feels. Metoprolol belongs to a family of drugs called beta-blockers. These are medicines that “block” a certain hormone. Blocking this hormone slows your heartbeat. This can help lower the physical stress on your body. Beta-blockers can also be used to treat high blood pressure.

Taking Metoprolol just before surgery, while in the hospital and even after you return home can help lower the amount of work your heart has to do during this time.

What does perioperative mean?
Perioperative means the time around the surgery, usually from the time when you go into the hospital for surgery until the time when you are discharged home. Your doctor may want you to begin taking Metoprolol before your operation or while you are in the hospital.

How do I take this medicine and for how long?
Because you may not be able to eat or drink anything right after surgery, you will get this medicine through a vein (IV). When you are able to eat or drink, the medicine will be changed to a pill that you can swallow. Your doctor may want you to continue taking Metoprolol for a while after you return home.

What if I already take a medicine for my heart or high blood pressure?
While in the hospital, most patients taking medication for high blood pressure or other heart problems are switched to Metoprolol. This will be given either as a pill or as a medicine that goes into a vein (IV). If the medicine you are taking is a member of the beta-blocker family, you will continue to take this medicine before and after your surgery.
If the medicine you are taking is not a member of the beta-blocker family, you will continue taking this medicine before and after your surgery, however it will be changed to Metoprolol while you are in the hospital. You may also take Metoprolol for a short time after you return home. Your doctor will talk to you about this when you are discharged from the hospital.

What are the possible side effects of this medicine?

One of the good things about Metoprolol is that most people who take this medicine do not report any side effects.

However, you should let your doctor know if you experience any of these problems:

- A pulse rate of less than 55 beats per minute
- If your pulse is slow and not beating regularly or you feel that your heart is “skipping” beats
- You feel dizzy or light headed
- You have trouble catching your breath, or are wheezing

Your doctor’s telephone number is: ___________________