

# Dr. Pharmacist

By Suzy Cohen, R.Ph.

## Breaking The Vicious Cycle of Symptom, Drug, Nutrient Loss, More Symptoms

**Q** I've been getting terrible side effects like dizziness, weight gain, insomnia and forgetfulness since I started taking Coreg for chest pain. I'm going to stop taking it because I feel so bad, unless you tell me a way to solve these problems. -K.E.

**A** Don't just stop that drug or you could end up with dangerous "withdrawal" side effects. It's not that the drug is addictive - it's not - it's that your body is used to it and so is your heart. If you stop taking the drug suddenly, rather than weaning off it, you could experience a worsening of your chest pain (angina pectoris) and possibly cardiac arrhythmias or a heart attack.

So don't just suddenly stop taking Coreg or any beta blockers, including propranolol, metoprolol, sotalol, atenolol, nadolol and bisoprolol, among others.

The side effects you describe are typical of beta blockers, but I'm going to give you and other readers a general sense of what to do when a drug is driving you crazy:

Call your pharmacist, because sometimes what you think is a "side effect" is actually a sign of drug toxicity. Your pharmacist is like a walking encyclopedia and can tell the difference. Also, he/she can screen for interactions and see if you've combined a particular food, beverage or other drug that causes your presumed side effect.

Call your doctor's office; make sure they document this in your file and offer you suggestions. For instance, you may need a lower dosage. What's good for a 40-year-old is not good for a 70-year-old, because they process their medication much more slowly.

Your doctor may need to prescribe a different drug altogether. So a person with heart disease who can't tolerate beta blockers could theoretically try a diuretic, calcium channel blocker, ACE inhibitor or nitroglycerin.

It could be as simple as taking your medicine at night, allowing you to sleep through some of the crummy side effects. Muscle relaxers, blood pressure pills and painkillers are best taken at night because they cause dizziness, fatigue, and nausea.

Sometimes taking medicine with a snack or a meal buffers nasty GI side effects. Ibuprofen, naproxen and many antibiotics come to mind here.

Realize that you need to take "energizing" drugs in the morning - for example SSRI antidepressants (Zoloft, Prozac) and thyroid medications should be taken in the morning. If you take them at night, you might sleep fitfully, if at all.

Open your mind up to the possibility that complementary medicine like enzymes or vitamins could help. After all, you don't have chest pain because your blood stream is deficient in Coreg. Just because you have depression doesn't mean you are Paxil-deficient. See my point? Be open-minded to any non-drug method of healing. They are usually safer for you.

Did You Know? You should disinfect your workplace phone. One test revealed that the phone receiver had 25,127 germs per square inch. The toilet seat had only 49.

This information is not intended to treat, cure or diagnose your condition. Suzy Cohen is a registered pharmacist. To contact her, visit [www.dearpharmacist.com](http://www.dearpharmacist.com).

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# Bakin' Bits

By Bonnie Dick

Happy New Year everyone! We have another year to make ourselves over, so like alot of people I've started thinking about diet food. And like most people, I can stand to lose some weight. Five years ago, I lost 51 pounds with Weight Watchers, so I'm going back.

Among the many delicious recipes shared at meetings were the following cake recipes. All are baked in a 9 x 12" cake pan sprayed with Pam, for 30 minutes, at 350 degrees. After cooling, cut the cake into 12 pieces. Each piece with fat free Cool Whip is only 2 points on the Weight Watcher scale. No need to follow directions on the cake mix box or add eggs or oil. You'll be surprised by how good these cakes taste!

## CHOCOLATE CAKE

1 chocolate cake mix (sifted)  
 1 can Diet Cherry Cola or Diet Coke or Pepsi

Mix just these two things together and bake for 30 minutes in a cake pan.

## WHITE CAKE

1 white cake mix (sifted)  
 1 can crushed pineapple  
 Mix just these two things together and bake for 30 minutes in a cake pan.

## PUMPKIN CAKE

1 spice cake mix (sifted)  
 1/2 cup water  
 1 can pumpkin  
 Mix just these three things together and bake for 30 minutes in a cake pan. (I add water to this mix because it's just too thick to work with).

*Bonnie Dick "quit-tired" from the county treasurer's office last year, and lives in Clyde with her husband, Larry. Some of you may remember her from her column back in the eighties in the Clyde Enterprise called, "Bonnie 'n Clyde."*

*A published writer and poet, she enjoys down-home cooking for her family and friends and serving as secretary of the Board with the local Humane Society.*



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