Medicines called vasodilators open up blood vessels and make it easier for the heart to pump blood forward. These medicines may also open up veins to further improve blood flow. Hydralazine and nitrates are usually not used unless ACE inhibitors do not work well. In these cases, adding or substituting hydralazine or nitrates may improve symptoms. They are often prescribed together.
How They Are Used

There are many forms of nitrates available. The number of times you need to take these medicines may vary from once to several times a day.

Hydralazine is a medication known as a vasodilator which opens up blood vessels to improve blood flow and reduce the work the heart has to do.

Side Effects

The most common side effect of nitrates is headache. This normally goes away in 1–2 weeks and can be relieved with aspirin or Tylenol® (acetaminophen).

Side effects of hydralazine include irregular heartbeats, weakness, dizziness, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, or lack of appetite. If you have any of these side effects, you should call your doctor. He or she may wish to adjust your medicine, start you on a different medicine, or help you find ways to manage the side effects if they are minor.
Remember

Hydralazine and nitrates are used to improve your symptoms and to help your heart function better. Don’t be discouraged if you must take more than two or three medicines. Even if it takes four or five different medicines to control your heart failure, you can live a productive life.

None of us wishes to take a lot of medicine, but it may be necessary if you have heart failure.

Tips for Taking This Medicine

You will probably need to take these medicines three or four times a day. To help you remember to take your medicines:

✔ Ask a family member to help you.
✔ Post signs in important places to remind you.
✔ Set the alarm on your watch for when the next dose is due.

If you miss a dose of nitrate or hydralazine in any one day, take it as soon as you remember, but don’t take a double dose the next time to make up for the one you forgot.