

# Enalapril

**Enalapril** is a member of a class of medications called *angiotensin converting enzyme inhibitors*, or simply *ACE inhibitors*. These are *vasodilators*, agents which cause blood vessels (vaso-) throughout the body to relax and open wider (dilate). By decreasing the pressure inside blood vessels, the amount of work required by the heart to pump blood through the blood vessels is reduced. In addition, ACE inhibitors reduce the amount of sodium and water that are retained by the kidneys.

Enalapril is most commonly used in the treatment of heart disease and congestive heart failure. Prior to development of heart failure, enalapril may help to delay its onset for some cardiac conditions. Once heart failure occurs, enalapril plays an important role in cardiac therapy. Specifically, it helps to resolve heart failure, increase the time until heart failure recurs, and increase survival time following development of heart failure.

As a vasodilator, enalapril is also useful in the treatment of systemic arterial hypertension (high blood pressure). For this purpose, it may be used either alone or in conjunction with another anti-hypertensive drug (typically a medication called amlodipine). Enalapril is also used to treat certain types of kidney disease.

Before beginning therapy with enalapril (and other ACE inhibitors), blood work is performed in order to obtain baseline information regarding kidney function and electrolytes. Approximately 4-5 days after therapy is initiated and periodically thereafter, blood work should be repeated in order to monitor kidney values and potassium levels, both of which occasionally become elevated during therapy with ACE inhibitors. If systemic hypertension is the condition being treated, periodic blood pressure measurement is performed to assess initial and ongoing response to therapy.

Enalapril has been shown to be very well tolerated. Side effects are uncommon but may occasionally occur as a result of excessive lowering of blood pressure and specific changes in blood flow to the kidneys. Symptoms can include lethargy, weakness, loss of appetite, and rarely vomiting. Signs of development or worsening of heart failure may include coughing (in dogs), intolerance to exercise, rapid or labored breathing, or abdominal distension. If any of these symptoms are noted, or if you have any questions or concerns, please contact your veterinarian or Dr. Marshall immediately to discuss an appropriate plan.