



# Clinical Trial: Atenolol vs. Losartan in People with Marfan Syndrome

A clinical trial to compare the effects of the drugs atenolol and losartan on people with Marfan syndrome began in 2007. The clinical trial is based on research that showed losartan prevented aortic dilation (when the aorta grows too large) and other Marfan features in mice that have Marfan syndrome. Here are some facts about this very important clinical trial.

## **Who is in charge of the clinical trial?**

The trial is funded by the National Heart Lung and Blood Institute (NHLBI) of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), and conducted by the Pediatric Heart Network (PHN). The National Marfan Foundation (NMF) is also helping to support the trial.

## **What is the trial studying?**

The clinical trial is studying two drugs, atenolol and losartan, to see which one is better at slowing aortic growth. It also looks for and compares any side effects that can happen when a person takes either drug.

Once you are accepted into the clinical trial, you may be able to be in other smaller studies (ancillary trials). Your study center coordinator will tell you about the ancillary trial and what they are studying. The ancillary trials are offered at some but not at all centers.

## **What is Atenolol?**

Atenolol is a medication often used to treat high blood pressure. It is in a class of drugs called beta blockers. It is used to treat people with Marfan syndrome because lowering blood pressure may slow down how fast the aorta grows. In this way atenolol may delay, but rarely prevent, the need for aortic surgery in some people.

## **What is Losartan?**

Losartan is another medication used to treat high blood pressure. It is in a class of drugs called angiotension receptor blockers (ARB's). It may help manage Marfan syndrome in a way different from lowering blood pressure. The clinical trial is the first time losartan is being studied in people with Marfan syndrome. The trial will help find out if losartan is a safe and effective method.

## **Who can be in the trial? (What are the criteria for trial participation?)**

To be in the Clinical Trial you must:

- Be between the ages of six months and 25 years at the time you begin the trial.
- Have a diagnosis of Marfan syndrome.

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- Not be pregnant.
- Not have had any aortic surgery.
- Not have serious side effects from either atenolol or losartan.
- Not need to take atenolol or another beta blocker to treat a medical problem other than your dilated aorta.
- Be willing and able to travel 5 times over 3 years to the study center for all study echocardiograms and examinations.

**Does everyone in the trial take either atenolol or losartan?**

Everyone in the trial will receive either atenolol or losartan. This means everyone will receive a medication. There is no placebo (sugar pill) group. Your medication is chosen by chance. You and your doctor will not know which medication you are taking.

**Can I still be in the trial if I already take atenolol or losartan?**

For most people the answer is, yes. You will be slowly taken off the medication you now take and then put on either atenolol or losartan. It is important to understand, however, you cannot be in the trial if you need to take atenolol or another beta blocker to treat a medical problem other than your dilated aorta.

**Do I have to stop seeing my current doctors in order to be in the Clinical Trial?**

No. You can be in the Clinical Trial and continue to see your current doctors. In fact, it is important that trial doctors talk with and work with your current doctors.

**I want to be in the trial. What should I do?**

Choose a study center and contact the coordinator at that center. The coordinator will talk to you about the trial, answer your questions and help decide if you are eligible to be in the trial.

**I want to be in the trial but cannot afford to travel to a study center. What should I do?**

Talk to the coordinator at the study center about your need for financial help. The coordinator will first need to decide if you are eligible for the trial. Then the coordinator can tell you how to apply for the help with travel and hotel expenses.

**I am not eligible for the Clinical Trial. Because it is an approved medication, can my doctor prescribe losartan for blood pressure control?**

The National Marfan Foundation does not recommend switching from a beta blocker to losartan as a way to manage Marfan syndrome until the trial is completed. This is because we do not know whether losartan is clearly better than atenolol for taking care of people with Marfan syndrome. Also, we do not know if people with Marfan syndrome will have unwanted side effects when they take losartan.

**To find out more about the clinical trial and to find a study center:**

- Visit the NMF website at [www.marfan.org](http://www.marfan.org). Click on the words below the clinical trial icon and contact a study center of your choice.
- Visit the Pediatric Heart Network website at [www.pediatricheartnetwork.com](http://www.pediatricheartnetwork.com) Click on Current Studies and then Marfan
- Call the NMF Resource Center at (800) 8-MARFAN ext. 26

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