

CARDITONE (RESERPINE)

What is it?

The root of the rauwolfia plant is effective in lowering high blood pressure. It's been used in India and the East for thousands of years. It was the first drug used for high blood pressure in western medicine. Through a sad combination of erroneously high dosing and research errors, rauwolfia was dropped in favor of newer synthetic anti-hypertensive drugs. These, of course, have their own problems and over the past thirty years we've had a succession of high blood pressure medications, each designed to improve on the shortcomings of the previous one, and all becoming more expensive.

Rauwolfia and reserpine

Rauwolfia is the name of the plant. Reserpine is the name of the active ingredient in the plant. Reserpine has a soothing effect on excitatory centers in the brain and reduces blood pressure.

American pharmaceutical companies supply both rauwolfia root and reserpine. A 0.1 milligram dose of reserpine is roughly equivalent to 50 milligrams of rauwolfia root, and 0.2 milligram of reserpine is roughly equivalent to 100 milligrams of rauwolfia. The daily dose will range from 0.05 milligram to 0.25 milligram of reserpine, or 25 to 100 milligrams of Rauwolfia root.

Rauwolfia lasts for several days in the blood and its effects can last for several weeks, so rauwolfia and reserpine need to be taken just once a day or once every other day, as your physician prescribes.

Decades ago when western physicians first started using reserpine for their patients, they gave very high doses of 1 to 10 milligrams a day. Unfortunately, there were side effects to overdoses of reserpine. . .

High dose of reserpine can cause problems

High doses of reserpine can result in depression. As time went on and it was discovered that people did very well with much lower doses, four different

studies showed that reserpine at proper doses did not lead to depression. In one study, patients taking between .25 and 5 milligrams reserpine daily had no difference in amount of depression than did patients taking methyldopa, guanethidine, thiazide, or a beta-blocker such as propranolol or Inderal.

Another result of the high doses used initially was reports of duodenal ulcers. Again, with proper dosing, there's been no evidence that reserpine leads to ulcers. In one study reported in *Hypertension* in 1990 (Vol. 15 p. 348) stomach upset occurred in only 1.5% of patients taking reserpine compared with 7.7% of patients taking metoprolol, a beta-blocker. Another study of elderly people showed that those patients taking reserpine were less likely to be hospitalized for peptic ulcer disease than were people who did not take reserpine. This study, entitled "Reserpine Reconsidered: No Association with Serious Peptic Ulcer Disease," was published in the *Journal of General Internal Medicine* in 1993 (Vol. 8 P. 510).

Why did reserpine fall out of favor?

The Boston Collaborative Drug Surveillance Program published an article entitled "Reserpine and Breast Cancer" in *The Lancet*, 1974 (2:669-71). The report seemed to indicate a link between reserpine and breast cancer. Over the next four years, ten large studies were undertaken around the world to check this out; every study showed that reserpine did not cause breast cancer.

What side effects does reserpine have?

The most common side effect at proper dosages is nasal congestion which occurs in 5-15% of patients. A common side effect of many blood pressure medications is impotence; this appears to be less common with reserpine than with certain other hypertensives and frequently lower than in patients taking a placebo pill. This latter fact was published in the journal *General Internal Medicine* 1991 (Vol. 6 p. 561) in an article entitled: "Reserpine; a Relic from the Past or a Neglected Drug of the Present for Achieving Cost Containment in Treating Hypertension?"

Benefits of reserpine

Some antihypertensive drugs including diuretics increase cholesterol. Some common diuretics (like hydrochlorothiazide, or HCTZ) tend to increase cholesterol. Reserpine appears to reduce levels of cholesterol.

A single daily dose is all that is needed. Because reserpine is long-acting, when a person misses a dose or discontinues entirely, their blood pressure does not suddenly go up.

One unhappy consequence of high blood pressure is enlargement of the muscle of the heart. Reserpine helps the heart return to a normal size.

Who should not take reserpine?

Reserpine can cross the placenta and appear in the breast milk. Do not use this if you are pregnant or nursing.

If you have had peptic ulcer disease or depression, ask your physician before taking reserpine. Doses in the range of 10 milligrams a day can result in muscle contractions and even convulsions. Some people can gain weight.

Rauwolfia was one of the earliest substances used to treat psychosis. In higher doses it has a sedating effect which might lead to depression.

Other uses of rauwolfia

Rauwolfia has been used for anxiety and psychosis because at higher doses it tends to calm a person and slow them down. Several studies have shown reserpine to be effective in helping people with Cushing's Disease. (Cushing's Disease is a disorder in which the adrenal gland makes too much cortisone). Tardive dyskinesia, a side of certain antipsychotic drugs, has been treated with reserpine.

A good general view of rauwolfia was published in *Clinical Pharmacology and Therapeutics* Oct. 1996 (Vol. 60 p. 368) by H.S. Fraser. The title of the article is "Reserpine: A Tragic Victim of Myths, Marketing and Fashionable Prescribing."

Carditone

Carditone is a preparation of rauwolfia, the plant that contains reserpine, in combination with several Ayurvedic herbs intended to enhance its effect and compatibility with your physiology.

Convolvulus pleuricalus

Convolvulus is a plant used in Ayurvedic medicine as a calming and diuretic agent.

Magnesium

Magnesium lowers blood pressure immediately when given intravenously. Oral magnesium taken for several months will lower blood pressure. Ask for our detailed information sheet on magnesium.

How to take Carditone

Use Carditone with your doctor's advice.

