Nifedipine is a calcium antagonist which inhibits excitotoxic-contraction coupling in myocardial and smooth muscle by blocking the transmembrane carrier of calcium. In this way, it reduces the peripheral vascular resistance as well as decreases myocardial contractility and myocardial oxygen demand. Nifedipine is also reported to act by reducing peripheral resistance.

PHARMACOKINETICS: Nifedipine is rapidly and almost completely absorbed from the gastrointestinal tract, but undergoes extensive enterohepatic recirculation. Nifedipine is extensively metabolised in the liver by the cytochrome P450 enzyme system, and interactions, may occur with other medicines, such as quinidine, sharing the same metabolic pathway, and enzyme inducers, such as carbamazepine, phenytoin, and rifampicin.

SIDE-EFFECTS AND SPECIAL PRECAUTIONS: The most common side effects are those associated with the vasodilator action of nifedipine: flushing, headaches, lowering of blood pressure, tachycardia or bradycardia, hyperglycaemia, metabolic acidosis, hypoxia, cardiogenic shock, dyspepsia, and diarrhoea.

Skin reactions such as pruritus, urticaria, exanthema and isolated cases of exfoliative dermatitis have been observed. Unilateral conjunctivitis has been reported in single cases of patients with anterior uveitis. Gastro-intestinal disturbances, increased micturition frequency, lethargy, eye pain, blurred vision and mental depression, paraesthesia may occasionally occur.

Blood pressure should be monitored during initiation and upward titration of Cipalat Retard, especially if patients are on antihypertensive therapy.

The tablets should be taken with fluid before meals. Nifedipine should not be used in hepatic and renal function impairment.

Flushing, headaches, lowering of blood pressure, tachycardia or bradycardia, hyperglycaemia, metabolic acidosis, hypoxia, cardiogenic shock may occur at 5 to 6 hours, nausea, a feeling of warmth, tiredness and other gastro-intestinal disturbances, increased micturition frequency, lethargy, eye pain, blurred vision and mental depression, paraesthesia may occasionally occur.

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