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Drugs

L-DOPA IN PARKINSONISM L-dopa (L-desoxyphenylalanine) is being used with increasing frequency for the treatment of parkinsonism. The present study attempted to define some of the cardiovascular effects of this drug in animals and man. It appears that the effects of L-dopa are in fact similar to those of dopamine, the decarboxylated L-dopa. These effects include alpha- and beta-adrenergic stimulation, which result in improved myocardial contraction, arterial hypertension, tachycardia, and sometimes ventricular arrhythmias.

Most of the undesirable side-effects of L-dopa can be treated or prevented with alpha- and beta-adrenergic blocking agents, *e.g.*, propranolol and phentolamine. Because of the risk of inducing arrhythmias in patients with myocardial irritability or ischemia, it is suggested that L-dopa be administered under electrocardiographic control. Since an increased tolerance to L-dopa is known to occur, the authors suggest that in the presence of myocardial disease therapy be started with a small dose, which is gradually increased over a long period of time. The occasional orthostatic hypotension seen after administration of L-dopa is secondary to its vasodilating effect on the renal and mesenteric vascular beds. (*Goldberg, L. I., and others: Cardiovascular Effects of Levodopa, Clin. Pharmacol. Ther. 12: 376–382, 1971.*)

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