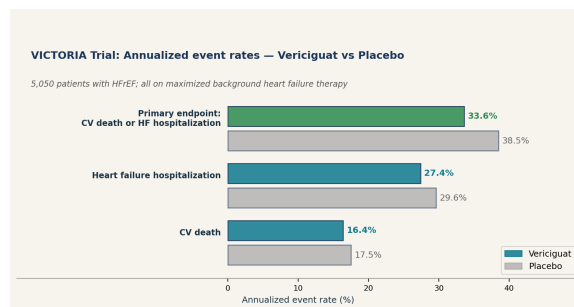


Understanding VERQUVO (Vericiguat)

A novel heart failure pill for patients who have recently worsened

A new pathway. A fifth pillar. For hearts that are still struggling despite everything else.



Online: <https://go.riasalimd.com/verquvo-guide>

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Names & Terms You Will Hear

Term	Meaning
VERQUVO	The brand name for vericiguat in the US.
Vericiguat	The generic name. It came out in 2021. It is the first drug in a new group called sGC stimulators.
Soluble guanylate cyclase (sGC) stimulator	The drug group. VERQUVO turns on an enzyme (sGC) in blood vessel walls. This enzyme is too sleepy in heart failure.
NO-sGC-cGMP pathway	The signal chain that helps blood vessels stay loose. Heart failure runs this chain down. VERQUVO turns it back on.
HFrEF	Heart failure with low pump strength. The heart pumps out less than 45% of its blood per beat. VERQUVO is made for this type.
GDMT	The four main heart failure drugs (beta-blocker, ACE/ARB/ARNI, MRA, SGLT2i). VERQUVO is added on top of these.
Worsening heart failure event	A recent hospital stay for heart failure. Or a visit that needed IV water pills. This event tells us the current drugs are not enough.



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What Is VERQUVO (Vericiguat)?

- VERQUVO (vericiguat) is a once-a-day pill. It came out in 2021. It is for adults with heart failure (EF less than 45%). It is used when you have just been in the hospital. Or when you needed IV water pills for fluid build-up.
- It works in a new way. It wakes up an enzyme called sGC in blood vessel walls. Heart failure makes this enzyme too sleepy. Waking it up loosens blood vessels. This takes strain off the heart.
- VERQUVO is not a first-pick drug. It is added as a fifth pill. It is for people who are already on the four main heart failure drugs but are still having flares.
- It is the only FDA-approved sGC stimulator for heart failure. A close cousin drug, riociguat (Adempas), is used for high lung pressure. You cannot take both.
- Dose goes up slowly: 2.5 mg once a day for 2 weeks. Then 5 mg for 2 weeks. Then 10 mg as the target dose. Take with food at each step.



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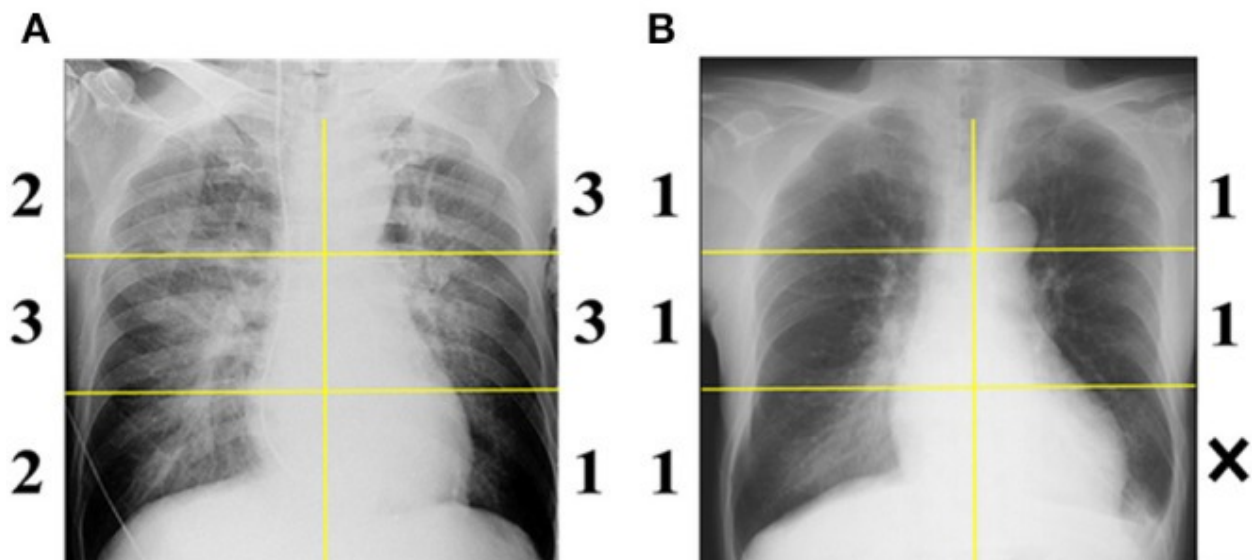
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Why It Matters

- In the VICTORIA trial of 5,050 people, VERQUVO cut the joint risk of heart death or hospital stay for heart failure by 10% (absolute risk drop 4.2%) compared to placebo.
- The main win was fewer hospital stays. The yearly stay rate fell from 29.6% to 27.4%.
- VERQUVO works through a new path. It does not drop blood pressure the same way ARNI does. It does not slow the heart like beta-blockers. It does not pull fluid like water pills. It does not block aldosterone like MRAs.
- A recent flare (hospital stay or IV water pill visit) is a bad sign. It points to faster decline and shorter life. VERQUVO is the only drug made for people who just had one of these flares.
- VERQUVO is an add-on. It works on top of your other heart failure pills, not in place of them.



Two real chest X-rays from patients with heart failure. The numbers grade how much fluid has built up in each part of the lung — higher numbers (left) mean more fluid. This kind of fluid buildup is what a worsening heart failure event looks like, the event that often lands someone in the hospital and is exactly what VERQUVO is prescribed after. Image: Kobayashi et al., *Frontiers in Cardiovascular Medicine* 2022 (CC BY 4.0).



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Treatment Options

- Start dose: 2.5 mg once a day with food. Move up every 2 weeks if you feel fine.
- Target dose: 10 mg once a day with food. The steps are 2.5 mg, then 5 mg, then 10 mg over about 4 weeks.
- Always take it with food. Food helps the body soak it up. Food also softens low blood pressure side effects.
- If you feel dizzy or light-headed, call us before the next step up. We may slow it down.
- Do not take VERQUVO with riociguat (Adempas). This mix is not safe.
- Avoid Viagra, Cialis, Levitra, and Stendra while on VERQUVO. The blood pressure drop can be big.
- Do not use in pregnancy. VERQUVO can hurt the baby. Women who could get pregnant must use birth control during use and for at least 1 month after the last dose.



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Risks, Benefits, and Alternatives

Every choice has trade-offs. Use this table to start the shared decision conversation.

Option	Risks	Benefits	Alternatives
VERQUVO (vericiguat)	Low blood pressure or dizziness (16%). Low blood count (10%). Light-headed feeling during dose steps. Cannot be used with Viagra, Cialis, Levitra, or riociguat. Do not use in pregnancy.	Cuts the joint risk of heart death or hospital stay by 10% in high-risk HFrEF. Works in a new way. Adds on top of the four main pills. Takes standard heart failure doses without needing a beta-blocker or water pill change.	Push the four main heart failure pills to target doses. Raise the Entresto dose. Add a CRT device if you qualify. Join a heart failure care program.
Entresto (sacubitril/valsartan)	Low blood pressure with symptoms. Cough (rare). Face or throat swelling (rare). Cannot be used with ACE inhibitors. Wait 36 hours after stopping an ACE.	Cut the joint risk by 20% in PARADIGM-HF (8,442 people). Top-tier choice in HFrEF. Works better than an ACE pill alone.	VERQUVO (works in a new way; add-on). ACE pill (less strong but an option). ARB.
SGLT2 inhibitor (empagliflozin, dapagliflozin)	Yeast infections in the groin. Low fluid. Sugar-ketone problem (rare). Hold when you are sick.	Cut the joint risk by 25 to 26% in EMPEROR-Reduced and DAPA-HF. Top-tier choice. Also helps the kidneys.	VERQUVO (new way; SGLT2i comes first). Loop water pill. No add-on.
Push current heart failure pills to target doses	Can take 3 to 6 months to see the full payoff. Does not touch the sGC path.	High-value step. Many people are not at target doses of ACE/ARB/ARNI, beta-blocker, or MRA. Push to target first, then add VERQUVO.	Add VERQUVO only after this step. Do not skip it for VERQUVO.



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Common Misconceptions

Myth	Reality
VERQUVO is a blood pressure pill.	It does lower blood pressure. But that is a side effect, not the main job. VERQUVO loosens blood vessels by waking up a signal that heart failure runs down. Blood pressure drop is a side effect of better vessel work.
If VERQUVO only cut events by 10%, is it a weak drug?	Look at who was in the study. The VICTORIA patients were very sick. They were on 4 or more heart failure drugs and had just been in the hospital. Any gain in this group counts. The real-world drop was 4.2%. That means about 1 in 24 people avoided a hospital stay or heart death.
I do not need VERQUVO because I already take the four main heart failure drugs.	That group is exactly who VERQUVO is for. It is added on top of the four main drugs. If you have just needed IV water pills or a hospital stay for heart failure, your heart doctor may add it.
I can use Viagra or Cialis safely with VERQUVO.	No. This mix is not safe. Viagra, Cialis, Levitra, Stendra, and sGC stimulators all loosen blood vessels. Together they can drop blood pressure to a dangerous level. Tell every doctor you take VERQUVO.
VERQUVO is the same as Adempas (riociguat).	They are used for different things. Both wake up the same enzyme. You cannot take both. Riociguat (Adempas) is for high lung pressure. VERQUVO is for heart failure with low pump strength. They should never be used together.
The dose steps are optional.	The 2.5 mg, then 5 mg, then 10 mg plan over 4 weeks is key. It lets your blood vessels adjust. It cuts the risk of a blood pressure drop. Jumping right to 10 mg raises the risk of a bad drop.



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Possible Complications

Knowing what can go wrong helps you spot problems early. Most complications are uncommon, especially with treatment.

Where / What	What Can Happen
Low blood pressure	The most common side effect. About 16% of people. It is worst during dose steps. Check your blood pressure at home after each step. Call us if you stay dizzy or light-headed.
Low blood count (anemia)	Seen in 10% of people. Most cases are mild. Tell us if you have new bad tiredness, pale skin, or worse shortness of breath. We check labs at follow-up visits.
Fainting	Rare but it can happen during dose steps. Risk is higher if you also take nitrates or blood pressure pills. Get up slowly. Sit on the edge of the bed for 30 seconds before you stand.
Drug mix risk — ED pills or other sGC drugs	Sildenafil, tadalafil, vardenafil, avanafil, and riociguat are not safe with VERQUVO. The mix can drop blood pressure to a danger zone. It can cause fainting and shock.
Risk to a baby in pregnancy	Animal data shows it can hurt a baby. Use strong birth control. Get a pregnancy test before you start. Tell us right away if you may be pregnant. Stop VERQUVO and call us.



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Points to Know

If you remember nothing else, remember these key points.

- Always take it with food. Food helps the body soak it up. Food also softens side effects.
- The dose plan takes about 4 weeks: 2.5 mg, then 5 mg, then 10 mg. Do not rush the steps.
- Do not take any ED pills (Viagra, Cialis, Levitra, Stendra). The blood pressure drop can be bad.
- Check your blood pressure at home, more so after each dose step. Call us if you feel very light-headed.
- Women who could get pregnant must use strong birth control. A pregnancy test is needed before you start.
- Do not take riociguat (Adempas). Same drug group. Same risk.
- If you miss a dose, take it the same day. Do not take two doses on the same day.
- VERQUVO works best when your other four heart failure pills are at target doses. Ask us at each visit if we can push them up.



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When to Call Us - and When to Call 911

If you are not sure, call. We would rather hear from you twice than miss a real problem.

- Bad dizziness, light-headed feeling, or fainting. Call us today, more so after a dose step.
- Worse shortness of breath. Call us today.
- Fast weight gain (3 to 5 lb in 2 to 3 days). Call us today. This is more fluid.
- New, bad tiredness or weakness. Call us.
- Before any new medicine. Most of all Viagra, Cialis, Levitra, or any nitrate. Call us first.
- If you think you may be pregnant. Stop VERQUVO and call us right away (risk to the baby).
- Heavy bleeding from any spot. Call 911.
- Chest pain, sudden shortness of breath, or passing out. Call 911.

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Trusted Resources

The links below are the trusted resources Dr. Ali used to write this guide and that he recommends you visit for more information. Each is a clickable link in the digital version and a Short.io tracked URL on the printed version.

- [Cleveland Clinic — Vericiguat \(Verquvo\)](#) - Patient-friendly drug profile with dosing, side effects, and monitoring.
- [MedlinePlus — Vericiguat](#) - NIH-curated drug information including interactions and pregnancy warning.
- [American Heart Association — Heart Failure Treatment](#) - AHA overview of heart failure medications and management strategies.
- [Heart Failure Society of America — Patient Resources](#) - HFSA patient education resources for living with heart failure.



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Sources Used to Build This Guide

Every recommendation in this guide is grounded in one or more of the studies, guidelines, or trusted resources below. Short links are tracked so Dr. Ali can see which references patients are reading; nothing personally identifying is captured.

- [VICTORIA Trial — Vericiguat in HFrEF \(Armstrong et al, NEJM 2020\)](#) [Clinical Trial]
Pivotal 5,050-patient RCT: vericiguat reduced CV death or HF hospitalization by 10% (ARR 4.2%) in high-risk HFrEF patients recently hospitalized or needing IV diuretics. Anchors all efficacy claims.
- [FDA Drug Approval — Vericiguat \(Verquvo\) \(FDA 2021\)](#) [Guideline]
FDA approval basis, labeled indication (EF < 45%, recent worsening HF), and initial labeling safety data including pregnancy contraindication.
- [ACC/AHA/HFSA Heart Failure Guideline 2022 \(Heidenreich et al, JACC 2022\)](#) [Guideline]
Class IIb recommendation for vericiguat in HFrEF patients who remain symptomatic on maximally tolerated GDMT. Positions VERQUVO in the 5th-line add-on tier.
- [AAFP — Steps New Drug Review: Vericiguat \(AFP 2022\)](#) [Guideline]
Independent STEPS new drug review providing unbiased efficacy and safety summary, including NNT/NNH calculations. Anchors the realistic-expectations section.
- [Münzel et al — Soluble Guanylate Cyclase and Heart Failure Pathophysiology \(Circulation 2021\)](#) [Clinical Trial]
Mechanism review: explains why NO-sGC-cGMP pathway is impaired in heart failure and how sGC stimulators address the vasodilatory deficit. Foundation for the mechanism section.
- [Cleveland Clinic — Vericiguat \(Verquvo\)](#) [Clinical]
Patient-friendly drug profile covering dosing, titration schedule, and side effects.
- [MedlinePlus — Vericiguat](#) [Clinical]
NIH-curated drug information including pregnancy warning, drug interactions, and missed-dose guidance.
- [American Heart Association — Heart Failure Treatment Options](#) [Clinical]
AHA patient overview of guideline-directed medical therapy for heart failure, contextualizing where vericiguat fits.



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About This Guide

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Version: 2026-08-15

Reviewer note: Reviewed against Merck prescribing information, AAFP STEPS review, and verquvo-us.com patient materials. Ours adds: VICTORIA event-rate chart (vericiguat vs placebo side-by-side), explicit positioning as 5th-line add-on after the four-pillar HFrEF regimen, NNT framing from the AAFP review, the 2.5 to 5 to 10 mg titration ladder, and the PDE5 inhibitor / sGC stimulator contraindication explained in plain language.

Disclaimer

This guide is for educational purposes only and does not replace medical advice from your physician. Recommendations may not apply to every patient. Always follow the specific instructions of Dr. Ali and your care team. In an emergency call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department.



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