

BONUS 1

The Pharmacology Decoder

Drug classes at a glance — read the ending, know the drug.

Pharmacology feels impossible when you try to memorise every drug one by one. You don't have to. Most drugs in the same class share the same **name ending (suffix)**. Learn the pattern, and one glance at a drug name tells you its class, what it does, and what to watch for. Below are the endings you'll meet most in school and on your licensing exams.

Cardiovascular & Blood Pressure

Ending	Drug class	Example(s)	What it does / watch for
-olol	Beta blockers	metoprolol, atenolol, propranolol	Lower heart rate & BP. Watch for bradycardia; caution in asthma.
-pril	ACE inhibitors	lisinopril, enalapril, captopril	Lower BP. Classic dry cough; risk of hyperkalaemia & angioedema.
-sartan	ARBs	losartan, valsartan	Lower BP. Used when ACE inhibitors cause cough (no cough).
-dipine	Calcium channel blockers	amlodipine, nifedipine	Lower BP by relaxing vessels. Watch for peripheral oedema.
-statin	Statins	atorvastatin, simvastatin	Lower cholesterol. Watch for muscle pain (myopathy) & liver enzymes.
-parin	Anticoagulants (heparins)	heparin, enoxaparin	Prevent clots. Monitor bleeding; heparin antidote = protamine sulfate.

Antibiotics & Anti-infectives

Ending	Drug class	Example(s)	What it does / watch for
-cillin	Penicillins	amoxicillin, ampicillin	Antibiotic. Always ask about penicillin allergy.
cef-/ceph-	Cephalosporins	cephalexin, ceftriaxone	Antibiotic. Possible cross-allergy with penicillins.
-floxacin	Fluoroquinolones	ciprofloxacin, levofloxacin	Broad antibiotic. Watch for tendon rupture; caution in children/pregnancy.
-cycline	Tetracyclines	doxycycline, tetracycline	Antibiotic. Avoid in pregnancy & young children (teeth); photosensitivity.
-thromycin	Macrolides	azithromycin, erythromycin	Antibiotic. GI upset common.

-micin/-mycin	Aminoglycosides (e.g. - micin)	gentamicin, tobramycin	Antibiotic. Watch kidney & ear (oto-) toxicity. See nuance below.
-vir	Antivirals	acyclovir, oseltamivir	Treat viral infections.

Stomach, Hormones & Nervous System

Ending	Drug class	Example(s)	What it does / watch for
-prazole	Proton pump inhibitors (PPIs)	omeprazole, pantoprazole	Reduce stomach acid. Long-term: low magnesium, B12.
-tidine	H2 blockers	famotidine, cimetidine	Reduce stomach acid (milder than PPIs).
-sone/-solone	Corticosteroids	prednisone, prednisolone	Reduce inflammation. Watch high glucose, infection risk; never stop abruptly.
-pam/-lam	Benzodiazepines	diazepam, lorazepam, alprazolam	Sedation/anxiety. Dependence & respiratory depression; antidote = flumazenil.
-caine	Local anaesthetics	lidocaine, bupivacaine	Numb tissue. Watch cardiac/CNS effects if given systemically.

The one nuance to remember: "-mycin" vs "-micin". Drugs ending in **-micin** (gentamicin, tobramycin) are usually **aminoglycosides** — nephrotoxic and ototoxic. Drugs ending in **-thromycin** (azithromycin) are **macrolides**. Vancomycin fits neither box cleanly. Suffixes are a shortcut, not a law — always confirm the actual drug.

Please note: This is a study aid to help you recognise patterns, not a prescribing or dosing guide. Suffix rules have exceptions, and drug classifications can differ slightly between references. Always verify against your course materials, your national formulary, and current clinical guidelines before applying anything in practice.