

# CYCLOPEDIA

Questions answered, subjects explained – Cyclopedia is your bimonthly cycling reference guide



Cycling on beta blockers is OK

Left: Getty Images

## Health

**Q & A**

### Cycling on beta blockers

**Q** I am 60 and have recently been prescribed beta blockers to control high blood pressure. I am female, reasonably fit, normal weight and don't smoke but have a family history of hypertension. I am used to cycling distances of about 15-20 miles, including hills. How much should I expect my heart and circulation to gradually adapt to a slower pulse rate? And to what extent should I alter what I do in the light of the medication?

**Alison Upfold**

**A** Well done on addressing an important risk factor for heart attacks and stroke. Nobody likes to take medication but, with the right combination of blood pressure lowering drugs, you should be able to continue to exercise and keep fit. Beta blockers work a bit like a governor on the heart rate. They slow down your pulse and prevent it rising too high. The full effect of your dosage should be clear a couple of weeks after starting.

In practice this means that, when you come to a steep hill, you may need to slow down or even walk. There is no right or wrong here; just do what you are comfortable with, as long as you are not unduly breathless and do not have

## Your Experts



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chest tightness. If the effect is too strong, ask your doctor to look at the dosage. (The alternative options would be to avoid routes with steep hills or to consider an e-bike.) One other side effect of beta blockers can be cold hands and feet, so wrap up warm!

**Dr Kate Brodie**

## Technical

### E-bike chain life

**Q** I have been told that my new Raleigh e-bike with Bosch drive will require a new chain every 500 miles. This seems a surprisingly short life to me. I would appreciate your guidance.

**Leslie Kinsman**

**A** The lifespan of transmission components depends on many factors. It is impossible to give a definitive forecast even if they are all taken into account. Anything from the maintenance schedule and the environmental conditions in which they are used, through to rider strength and the chosen assistance power setting will affect the chain and sprockets.

Riding everywhere with the maximum available assistance – say, 250W – will chew through transmission components if the cycle has a bottom bracket-mounted drive system, which puts both rider effort and assistance power through them. A hub drive is easier on chains and sprockets as the drivetrain only transmits the rider's power.

It's entirely possible that a mid-drive e-bike chain used through a harsh winter

