



Food & Medication Interactions

Many medications can be taken with or without food and remain effective, however in some cases, if certain medications are taken with certain foods the medication can have a different effect in the body. Sometimes the medications effect can be decreased, increased, or take on a different effect entirely. Some of the most significant food and medication interactions are listed below.



Grapefruit/grapefruit juice:

- Grapefruit is often the first food many think of when it pertains to medication interactions. The juice has components that alter the way the liver metabolizes. As drugs are metabolized by the liver, the juice can alter the way drugs are distributed to the body, and therefore the effectiveness of them.

Vitamin K and Coumadin:

- Vitamin K found in foods such as leafy greens, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, and others can alter the effectiveness and safety of warfarin. It has previously been thought that Vitamin K containing foods should be avoided altogether, however it's well accepted that it's more important to maintain a consistent intake; that is, eat a similar amount of these foods each day.

Milk and Antibiotics:

- The proteins and minerals found in milk can interfere with the absorption and utilization of certain antibiotics. Tetracycline and ciprofloxacin are just two antibiotics whose absorption can be affected by the consumption of milk. There are many antibiotics, all of which can interact differently with different types of foods, so be sure to check with a doctor.

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MAOIs and Tyramine:

- MAOIs are a type of anti-depressant, and if taken with foods containing tyramine, they can lead to a spike in blood pressure. Foods with tyramine include aged cheese (aged cheddar and Swiss and certain blue cheeses); cured meats (pepperoni, salami, and some sausages); fermented cabbage (sauerkraut and kimchee); soy sauce, fish sauce, and shrimp sauce; yeast-extract spreads (Marmite); broad bean pods (fava beans); and overripe fruits.

Alcohol:

- Just as grapefruit juice can affect the way drugs are metabolized because of its effect on the liver, alcohol can do the very same thing. Consumption of alcohol with most medications is often discouraged. Discuss this with your doctor if you consume alcohol regularly.

Herbal Supplements:

- Various herbal supplements (e.g., ginkgo biloba and echinacea) can greatly alter the effectiveness of certain medications. Be cautious when taking these, inform your doctor before starting one, and always include it on a list of medications.

This is not a comprehensive list of interactions, only some of the most common. It is also important to know that as the number of medications taken increases, as does the risk for interactions. Always keep a detailed list of all medications and supplements to share with your doctor.

Check with a dietitian or doctor for your specific dietary needs.

Additional Notes:

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