

Medicine and Food

Do they mix?

What is a drug-food interaction?

A drug-food interaction happens when the food you eat affects the ingredients in a medicine you are taking, so the medicine can't work the way it should.

Drug-food interactions can happen with both prescription and over-the-counter medicines, including antacids, vitamins and iron pills.

Are all medicines affected by food?

Not all medicines are affected by food, but many medicines can be affected by what you eat and when you eat it. For example, with some medicines, taking the pill at the same time you eat may interfere with the way your stomach and intestines absorb the medicine. If you have food in your stomach at the same time you take a drug, it may delay or decrease the absorption of the drug, so you should usually take medicine on an empty stomach (one hour before eating or two hours after eating).

Because some medicines are easier to tolerate when taken with food, ask your doctor or your pharmacist whether it's OK to take your medicine with a snack or a meal.

Facts to remember about drug-food interactions:

- Read the prescription label on the container and, if you don't understand something or think you need more information, ask your doctor or pharmacist about it.
- Read directions, warnings and interaction precautions printed on all medicine labels and packages. Even over-the-counter medicines can cause problems.
- Take medicine with a full glass of water.
- Don't stir medicine into your food or take capsules apart (unless your doctor tells you to do so), because this may change the way the drug works.
- Don't take vitamin pills at the same time you take medicine, because vitamins and minerals can interact with some drugs.
- Don't mix medicine into hot drinks, because the heat from the drink may destroy the effectiveness of the drug.
- Never take medicine with alcoholic drinks.

This handout provides a general overview on this topic and may not apply to everyone. To find out if this handout applies to you and to get more information on this subject, talk to your family doctor.



The American Academy of Family Physicians, one of the nation's largest medical specialty groups, is committed to promoting and maintaining high standards for family doctors—the doctors who give ongoing, comprehensive care to people of all ages.

© 1996 American Academy of Family Physicians
8880 Ward Parkway, Kansas City, MO 64114-2797
<http://www.aafp.org>

Permission is granted to reproduce this material for nonprofit educational uses. Written permission is required for all other uses, including electronic uses.