



ALCOHOL
AND
MEDICINE:

Ask Before You Mix

"These interactions can be very subtle and confusing to doctor and patient alike. Very often, the alcohol factor is missed."

*Tom Delbanco, M.D.
Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center*

Prescription and non-prescription medicines can improve your health, if taken correctly.

However, you might not get the full benefit from your medicine when combined with caffeine, tobacco, and dairy products.

Alcohol is another common substance that can cause dangerous interactions if used with certain prescription and nonprescription medicines.

Alcohol is dangerous when used in combination with sedatives, sleeping pills, tranquilizers, and some prescription pain relievers. Persons using antidepressants, blood thinners, heart or antiseizure medications may also be at risk.

Mixing alcohol with these medicines may cause an increased effect of the medications, and liver damage, change in blood pressure, coma and even death.

Check the chart (at right) against your own medications. Ask your doctor, pharmacist, or other health care professional if you have any concerns, and remember to **"Ask Before You Mix."**

COMMON MEDICINES' INTERACTIONS WITH ALCOHOL

NON-PRESCRIPTION MEDICINES

<i>Alcohol and:</i>	<i>Can Cause:</i>
Pain Relievers (e.g., Motrin [®] , Advil [®] , Aleve [®])	Stomach and intestinal bleeding; ulcers
Acetaminophen (Tylenol [®])	Increased risk of liver complications with alcohol use
Antihistamines (Benadryl [®])	Unsafe sedating effect, drowsiness, confusion

PRESCRIPTION MEDICINES

<i>Alcohol and:</i>	<i>Can Cause:</i>
Antidepressants (tricyclics, like Elavil [®] , Pamelor [®])	Unsafe sedating effect; possible reduced effect of medicine; confusion
Anti-diabetics	Dangerous drops in blood sugar, especially with chronic alcohol use
Antibiotics (Flagyl [®])	Facial flushing, headache, nausea, stomach pain
Benzodiazepines (Xanax [®] , Valium [®] , Halcion [®])	Unsafe sedating effect; loss of motor coordination such as ability to drive
Heart Medications (Nitroglycerin)	Dangerous drops in blood pressure possible
Pain Medications (Morphine, Codeine)	Unsafe sedating effect

Other Factors Affecting Medicine-Alcohol Interactions:

- Which medicines you take;
- Amount of medicine taken;
- Amount of alcohol consumed;
- Relationship between time that medicine is taken and alcohol is consumed;
- Your age and health conditions that influence how a medicine is metabolized (broken down) in your body.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

About Safe Use of Medicines:

National Council on Patient Information and Education (NCPIE)

Address: 4915 Saint Elmo Ave., Suite 505
Bethesda, MD 20814-6053

Phone: (301) 656-8565

Fax: (301) 656-4464

E-mail: ncpie@erols.com

URL: <http://www.talkaboutrx.org>

About Precautions with Alcohol:

American Medical Association

Phone: (312) 464-5000

URL: <http://jama.ama-assn.org>

Click on *Patient Page Index*, then go to *Previous Topics* and select "alcohol."

National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information

Phone: 1-800-729-6686

URL: <http://www.health.org>

Alcoholics Anonymous

Phone: (212) 870-3400

URL: <http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org>

This brochure was developed by NCPIE and Craig Williams, Pharm.D., Wishard Memorial Hospital, Indianapolis, IN.
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