

2019 October Health Notes by Evelyn Ames

Mixing Foods and Medications: Interaction of Common Foods and Various Medicines

An AARP online survey (over 1800 adults over age 50) in 2016 found 75 percent of those participating take a prescription medication on a regular basis. Percentages were higher for those 65 and older. Of these, over 80 percent take at least two prescription drugs and over 50 percent take four or more. African American and low-income individuals tend to take more medications. Other reports (e.g., Nat Inst on Aging) suggest that more than 80 percent of older patients (ages 57 to 85 years) use at least one prescription medication daily, with more than 50 percent taking more than five medications or supplements daily. The following chart lists common foods that have the potential for interactions with medications. Suggestions included how to safeguard oneself.

FOOD	DON'T MIX	WHY
Bananas, green leafy vegetables, oranges, salt substitutes	ACE inhibitors such as captopril (Capoten), enalapril (Vasotec), and lisinopril (Prinivil, Zestril), used to lower blood pressure or treat heart failure. Avoid mixing with some diuretics, such as triamterene (Dyrenium). Diuretics are used to reduce fluid retention and treat high blood pressure.	Are all high in potassium. Potassium helps provide electrical signals to heart-muscle cells and other cells. Consuming them with listed medications could increase amount of potassium in body and possibly lead to an irregular heartbeat or heart palpitations—which could be deadly.
Broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, kale, spinach	<u>Blood thinners</u> such as warfarin (Coumadin).	Foods containing a lot of vitamin K can reduce drugs' ability to thin blood. In some people with heart disease, this could trigger a heart attack or a stroke. Suggestion: do not overload on leafy greens; maintain a consistent diet. Avoid overuse of raw kale (which in itself, thins the blood).
Cheese, yogurt, milk, calcium supplements, antacids with calcium	Tetracycline is an antibiotic used to treat bacterial infections.	Calcium in these foods and products can interfere with the body's ability to fully absorb the antibiotic. In general, tetracycline works better if taken 1 hour before or 2 hours after eating.
Alcohol, avocados, bananas, chocolate, salami	Drugs such as metronidazole (Flagyl) and linezolid (Zyvox), are used to treat bacterial infections.	These foods, along with tap beer, red wine, and sherry, contain tyramine, an amino acid that can cause blood pressure to spike if taken with linezolid. Tyramine is also found in foods that are aged, pickled, fermented, or smoked, such as processed cheeses, anchovies, and dry sausage. Alcohol and metronidazole together could cause nausea, stomach cramping, and vomiting.
Soybean flour, walnuts	Thyroid drugs such as levothyroxine (Levothroid, Levoxyl, Synthroid).	High-fiber foods can prevent the body from absorbing medications. One study found drugs were better absorbed when taken at bedtime rather than a half-hour before breakfast, which is what is usually recommended in the instructions.