

Health Tips

from New London Hospital

Drug Interactions

Drug interactions can be a serious problem and often occur due to lack of information or understanding. If you take several different medications, see more than one doctor, or have certain medical conditions, you should know about all possible drug reactions and interactions. It is important that your doctors know about every medication you take before they prescribe new ones, in order to prevent drug interactions.



Lisa Templeton, RPh

There are three categories of drug interactions:

1. Drug-Drug Interaction: Two or more medications react with each other
2. Drug-Food/Beverage Interaction: Medications react with foods or beverages (such as alcohol)
3. Drug-Condition Interaction: Existing medical condition makes certain medications possibly harmful

It is very important to read the label on each prescription or non-prescription medication and learn about each medicine prior to taking the drug to prevent mixing possibly harmful drugs. On each over-the-counter medication, a label is placed on the packaging to inform you of important information about the drug. Read each section on the label prior to consumption. The sections include: *Active Ingredients* and *Purpose; Uses; Warnings* (this is where information about potential drug interactions is listed); *Directions; Other Information; Inactive Ingredients;* and *Questions or Questions & Comments.*

If you have any questions about over-the-counter or prescription medications, speak to your doctor or pharmacist. If you are prescribed a new medication, discuss with your doctor the possibility of drug interactions with all over-the-counter drugs, prescription drugs, dietary supplements, vitamins, botanicals, minerals and herbals, and food you already take before starting the new prescription. You should also discuss the side effects, what you can and cannot take or do while on the medication, and what the medication is doing for your body. Your pharmacist can assist you with this information as well, and can also assist you by giving you the package insert of each medication. This insert contains more information about potential drug interactions and gives you more information about the medication you will soon be taking.

Lisa Templeton, RPh is a registered pharmacist. For more information call 526-5233.

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