

# Alcohol and Medication Interactions

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Medicines can treat (or help reduce the symptoms of) many health problems that people have. However, any medicine should be taken properly to make sure that it is safe and effective for you.

Certain foods, beverages, alcohol, caffeine, and even cigarettes can interact with medicines. This may make them less effective or may cause dangerous side effects or other problems (such as falls and confusion). Sometimes people end up in the hospital because of these problems, particularly from medication-alcohol interactions.

## Guidelines for Seniors

You can reduce your risk of developing a medication-alcohol interaction problem if you:

1. Make sure your doctor and pharmacist know about every drug you are taking, including non-prescription drugs, over the counter drugs, and any supplements such as vitamins, minerals and herbal drugs. Don't omit anything. It is important for your health.
2. Let them know if you smoke or you drink alcohol, even if it is only occasionally. "Alcohol" includes all hard liquor (e.g. brandy, gin, whiskey), wine or sherry, and beer.
3. If you drink alcohol, ask your doctor or pharmacist to explain to you in down to earth language about how alcohol interacts with the particular drugs and supplements you are taking.

If there is a potential problem with your medications, ask if there is another kind that won't cause these problems.

Ask how your other drugs and supplements affect each other. Many drugs interact with other drugs. Some may cause serious medical conditions.

4. Carefully follow the instructions on your medications.
5. If you have problems or experience side effects from your medication, call your health care provider right away.



I can get more information in my community on medication interactions from: