How Medicines and Nutrients Interact

Some medicines can affect the way your body uses food or the nutrients in food. Some medicines can:
- Decrease food intake due to:
  - Decreased appetite.
  - Nausea.
  - Vomiting.
  - Unpleasant taste.
  - Dry mouth.
- Change nutrient absorption, metabolism, or excretion.

Nutrients in food can also affect the way your body uses some medicines. Some nutrients can:
- Change medicine absorption, metabolism, or excretion.
- Make medicines work faster, slower, or not at all.

Medicines and Nutritional Health

There is little chance that taking a medicine for a short time will cause a nutritional problem. However, long term use of some medicines may affect your nutritional health.

This does not mean you need to take a vitamin or mineral supplement if you take a medicine. Most people can get the variety of nutrients they need and in the proper amounts by eating a healthy diet.

Alcohol

A general rule is to not mix alcohol and medicines. Alcohol and medicine do not mix well. Alcohol can slow down or speed up how the body uses medicines. As a result, the action of medicines can be increased or reduced.

Nutrient Supplements

Excess vitamin or mineral supplements can change how medicines work. In excess, vitamin and mineral supplements can act like medicine instead of a nutrient.

Nutrients in excess can:
- Compete with other nutrients for absorption, transport or metabolism.
- Have a direct overdose effect.
Follow Directions
It is important to follow directions on how to take a medicine. Following directions can affect how or if a medicine will work properly. You also need to read all warnings on the label.

Tips to Lower Interactions
• Eat a healthy diet following the USDA MyPlate Plan.
• Follow the directions on how to take medicines, both prescription and over the counter. Read all warning labels on medicines.
• Tell your doctor about all medicines you take including over the counter medicines and alcohol.
• Tell your doctor about any new symptoms that occur when you take a medicine.
• Do not share medicines with others or take other peoples medicines.

Questions to Ask When You Get a New Medicine
• What is this medicine for?
• How often should I take the medicine and for how long?
• How should I store the medicine?
• Should I take the medicine with or without food?
• Does this medicine have any side effects?

Who Is At Risk?
People at higher risk of medicine nutrient interactions are those who:
• Eat a poor diet.
• Have serious health problems.
• Take two or more medicines.
• Do not following medicine directions.
• Take medicines for a long time.
• Drink alcohol or smoke heavily.

Sources
