

# Drug Interaction

## Facts you need to know

So very often, persons make a visit to the Doctor and receive prescriptions to cure or treat ailments. Many times, more than one medication is prescribed yet very few persons know their specific functions. As consumers, you have the right to question your Doctor and or Pharmacist on the functions, dosage and proper name of a prescribed drug. It is also the responsibility of the consumer to read labels and instructions carefully before taking any medication.

There are more opportunities today than ever before to learn about your health and to take better care of yourself. It is also most important to find out all you can about the medicines you take. Sharing medication and taking non-prescription drugs based on the recommendation of a relative or friend, without reading the label or seeking the advice of a doctor or pharmacist are both dangerous. Be a responsible and wise consumer and avoid these practices.

If you take different medications, see more than one doctor or have certain health conditions, you and your doctors need to be aware of all the medications you take to avoid potential problems, such as *drug interaction*.



***It is your right and responsibility as a consumer to read labels carefully and seek consultation on proper drug use.***

Drug interaction may make your drug less effective. It may cause unexpected side effects or increase the action of a particular drug. Some drug interactions can even be harmful to you.

Reading the label every time you use a prescription or non-prescription drug and taking the time to learn about drug interaction may be critical to your health. You can reduce the risk of potentially harmful drug interactions and side effects with a little bit of knowledge.

## **Categories of Drug Interactions**

### **1. Drug to drug Interactions**

This occurs when two or more drugs react with each other. The result may be of an adverse side effect. For example, mixing a drug you take to help you sleep (a sedative) and a drug you take for allergies (an antihistamine) can slow your reactions and make driving a car or operating machinery very dangerous.



*Mixing the drugs you take  
may lessen the effect on  
your condition or cause  
adverse side-effects.*

### **2. Drug to food /beverage interaction**

This results from drugs reacting with food or beverages. For example, alcohol should not be consumed with some medications, for example, antibiotics as this may cause nausea, vomiting, headache and possibly convulsions. Research has shown that alcohol-medication interactions may be a factor in a large percentage of emergency room admissions. An unknown number of less serious interactions may go unrecognized or unrecorded. Consult your doctor about how and what you may eat or drink when taking medication.

### **3. Drug to condition interaction**

This may occur when an existing medical condition makes certain drugs potentially harmful. For example, if you have high blood pressure, you could experience an unwanted reaction in taking a nasal decongestant.

### **Labelling Facts on Over-the-Counter Medicines**

Over-the-Counter (OTC) drug labels contain information about ingredients, uses, warnings and directions that are important to read and understand. The label also includes important information about possible drug interactions. In addition, drug labels may change, as new information becomes known. This is why it is especially important to read the label every time you use a drug.

#### **The “Active Ingredients” and “Purpose” section**

- Gives the names and states the amount of each effective component in the drug which targets the conditions of your illness.
- Indicates the use of each active ingredient.

#### **The “Uses” section of the label**

- Tells what treatment the drug offers you
- Helps you find the best drug for your specific symptoms.

**The “Warnings” section of the label provides important drug interaction and precaution information such as:**

- When to consult a doctor or pharmacist before use
- Which medical condition may make the drug less effective or unsafe
- Under what circumstances the drug should not be used (for example: age group, pregnancy and other special conditions)
- When to discontinue use.

**The “Directions” section**

- Tells the length of time and the amount of the product that you may safely use.
- Lists any special instructions on how to use the product.

**The “Other Information” section**

- Outlines required information about certain ingredients, such as sodium content for people with dietary restrictions or allergies

**The “Inactive Ingredients” section**

- Names each secondary ingredient, such as binders, colouring etc, which do not affect how powerful the drug is.

**The “Questions” section or “Questions or Comments” section**

- Provides the contact numbers of a source designated to answer questions about the product.

## **Do’s and Don’ts of Medication Use**

### **Do’s**

- Talk to your doctor or pharmacist about the drugs you take. When your doctor prescribes a new drug, discuss all over-the-counter drugs (OTCs), including birth control, dietary supplements, vitamins, botanicals, minerals, herbals and other prescribed drugs as well as the food you eat. Also, inform your doctor about any medical condition you may have, including allergies, bleeding problems and pregnancy and also if you are breastfeeding.

- Ask your Pharmacist for the package insert for each prescription drug you take as they provide more information about potential drug interactions.
- Before taking the drug, ask your doctor or pharmacist the following questions:
  - \* Can I take this drug with other medicines?
  - \* Should I avoid or consume more of certain foods, beverages or other products?
  - \* What are the possible drug interaction signs that should be anticipated?
  - \* How will the drug work in my body?
  - \* What ought to be done if I miss a dose?
  - \* Is there any special storage condition?
  - \* Is there more information available about the drug or my condition (on the Internet or in health and medical literature)?

## **Don'ts**

- Do not share or take medication on the recommendation of a friend or family member only. Consult a doctor or pharmacist before taking any over-the-counter (OTC) or prescription medication.
- Do not take medication without first reading the label. Make sure that you have the proper medication.
- Do not mix medication in pill bottles. Store medication in properly labeled original containers as received from the pharmacy.
- Do not crush tablets or open capsules when taking medication without first discussing this with your doctor or pharmacist.
- Do not keep medication that you are no longer taking, unless instructed to do so. Dispose of excess medication safely by flushing it down the toilet. Even if the same condition for which you were taking the medication recurs, the medication may no longer be good, or you may be taking other medication which may interact with the original medication.

Be a wise and informed consumer. Know how to take medication safely and responsibly so as to avoid possible allergic reactions or drug interactions. You have the Right to Safety and the Right to be informed. Exercise them! Your health is in your hands.



*Be a responsible consumer. Exercise your Right to Safety and Information . Protect your health.*

**HEAD OFFICE**

1b Holborn Road  
Kingston 10

Telephone: (876) 926 - 1650-2

Toll Free : 1-888-991- 4470

Facsimile: (876) 968 - 8729

E-mail: [cacjam@infochan.com](mailto:cacjam@infochan.com)

**MONTEGO BAY OFFICE**

United General Insurance Building  
30 Market Street, Montego Bay  
St. James

Telephone: (876) 940 - 6154

Toll Free : 1-888-991-9525

Facsimile: (876) 979 - 1036

E-mail: [western@consumeraffairsjamaica.gov.jm](mailto:western@consumeraffairsjamaica.gov.jm)