

Greenwich Hospital

**OVER-THE-COUNTER AND NUTRACEUTICAL
MEDICATION INTERACTIONS**

PATIENT/FAMILY INFORMATION SHEET

Why do medication reactions occur?

Medication interactions occur for several reasons. New discoveries are continuously bringing many medications to the market. In addition, there are many over-the-counter products that individuals buy on their own such as vitamins, herbal preparations and nutraceuticals (chemically derived products designed to restore natural substances, e.g. Glucosamine). Therefore, many individuals find themselves on an extensive list of medications. This is called polypharmacy. The consequences of polypharmacy may result in adverse responses, side effects and toxicities. The wide availability of over-the-counter products is unknown.

Although many find the use of vitamins, herbal preparations and nutraceuticals beneficial, in many cases, the correct dose or possible side effects when taken with certain foods or medications are unknown. Physicians need to have information on all medications that an individual takes in order to prescribe medication that will be effective and safe. Therefore, a complete list of prescribed medications, over-the-counter medications, herbals and nutraceuticals should be accessible at all times. This way, the list can be made available to the prescriber for evaluation before a new prescription is written.

How are drug interactions prevented?

The following recommendations aid in prevention of drug interactions:

1. Make sure your physician and pharmacist are aware of every drug you are taking, including prescribed medication, over-the-counter medications, herbals, and vitamins.
2. Keep a list of all medications you are taking with you at all times.
3. Take only what is prescribed or what has been approved by your physician or pharmacist.
4. Inquire whether a specific medication can be taken with another medication and whether it should be taken with or without food.
5. Avoid alcohol and caffeine (i.e. colas, tea, and coffee).

If you have questions concerning reactions to these or other substances, call your physician. The following table is only a partial list of medications, over-the-counter preparations, vitamins and herbals that may result in adverse or toxic effects to the consumer.

**OVER-THE-COUNTER DRUG INTERACTIONS
TABLE (Partial List)**

Over-the-Counter Medication	May Interact with/Cause:	Effect
Aluminum Antacids (Long term use)	Depletion of phosphate in foods and bones.	Softening of bones leading to fractures.
Dulcolax, Senna	Depletion of calcium, potassium in the body.	Feeling of weakness.
Aspirin	May deplete iron in the body. May cause stomach ulcers.	Feeling of weakness.
Mineral Oil	Depletion of fat soluble vitamins A, D, E, K	May weaken bones and adversely affect circulation.
Pseudoephedrine	Prescribed medications such as beta-blockers, high blood pressure pills	May cause these medications to become ineffective resulting in high blood pressure and increased heart rate.

**NUTRACEUTICAL DRUG INTERACTIONS TABLE
(Partial List)**

Nutraceutical	May interact with/cause:	Effect
Glucosamine	May affect insulin usage and sugar control.	May cause an increase in blood sugar.
coenzyme Q-10	Warfarin	May decrease blood thinning effect
Green Tea	Warfarin	Contains vitamin K-may decrease blood thinning effects.

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