

Did you know...

- Many types of medication can make you sleepy. Taking these medicines while drinking can make you even more drowsy, dizzy, and light-headed. You may have trouble concentrating or performing mechanical skills. **Mixing alcohol with certain medicines makes it dangerous for you to drive.** Combining alcohol with some medicines can lead to falls and serious injuries, especially among older people.



- Some medications, including many popular painkillers and cough, cold, and allergy remedies, contain more than one ingredient that can react with alcohol. Read the label on your medication bottle to find out exactly what ingredients it contains.
- Certain medicines contain up to 10 percent alcohol. Cough syrup and laxatives have some of the highest alcohol concentrations.
- Women and older people are at higher risk for harmful alcohol-medication reactions.
- Alcohol and medicines can interact harmfully even if they are not taken at the same time.

Remember...

Mixing alcohol and a medication puts you at risk for dangerous reactions. Protect yourself by avoiding alcohol if you are taking a medication and don't know its effect. To learn more about a medicine and whether it will interact with alcohol, talk to your pharmacist or health care provider.

Additional Reading

Alcoholism: Getting the Facts—describes what alcoholism and alcohol abuse are and offers useful information on when and where to seek help. English version: NIH Publication Number 96-4153 (Revised 2001); Spanish version: NIH Publication Number 97-4153-S (Revised 2001).

Drinking and Your Pregnancy—explains how drinking can hurt a developing baby, the problems that children born with fetal alcohol syndrome have, how to stop drinking, and where to go for help. English version: NIH Publication Number 96-4101 (Revised 2001); Spanish version: NIH Publication Number 97-4102 (Revised 2001).

Frequently Asked Questions About Alcoholism and Alcohol Abuse—provides answers to frequently asked questions about alcoholism and alcohol abuse. English version: NIH Publication Number 01-4735; Spanish version: NIH Publication Number 02-4735-S.

Make a Difference: Talk to Your Child About Alcohol—offers guidance to parents and caregivers of young people ages 10 to 14 on preventing underage drinking. English version: NIH Publication Number 00-4314 (Revised 2002); Spanish version: NIH Publication Number 00-4314-S (Revised 2002).

To order, write to: National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, Publications Distribution Center, P.O. Box 10686, Rockville, MD 20849-0686. The full text of all of the above publications is available on NIAAA's Web site (www.niaaa.nih.gov).



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Harmful Interactions: Mixing Alcohol with Medicines





You've probably seen this warning on medicines you've taken. The danger is real. Mixing alcohol with certain medications can cause nausea and vomiting; headaches; drowsiness; fainting; loss of coordination; and can put you at risk for internal bleeding, heart problems, and difficulties in breathing. Alcohol also can decrease the effectiveness of a medication or make it totally ineffective.

Many of these medications can be purchased "over-the-counter" without a prescription, including herbal remedies and others you may never have suspected of reacting with alcohol. This pamphlet describes the harmful effects of drinking while taking certain medicines. Brand names are used only to help you recognize a medicine you may be taking. **The list presented here does *not* include all the medications that may react with alcohol. Most important, the list does *not* include all the ingredients in every medication.** Medications are safe and effective when used appropriately. Your pharmacist or health care provider can help you determine which medicines interact harmfully with alcohol.

| Symptoms/ Disorders | Common medications and selected brand names | Some possible reactions with alcohol |
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| Angina (chest pain), coronary heart disease | Isordil® (isosorbide), nitroglycerine | Rapid heartbeat, sudden changes in blood pressure |
| Anxiety | Xanax® (alprazolam); Klonopin® (clonazepam); Valium® (diazepam); Ativan® (lorazepam) | Drowsiness, dizziness; increased risk for overdose |
| Blood clots | Coumadin® (warfarin) | Occasional drinking may lead to internal bleeding; heavier drinking may have the opposite effect, resulting in possible blood clots, strokes, or heart attacks |
| Colds, coughs, flu, allergies | Benadryl® (diphenhydramine); Tylenol® Cold and Flu (chlorpheniramine); Robitussin A-C® (codeine) | Drowsiness, dizziness; increased risk for overdose |
| Depression | Elavil® (amitriptyline); Anafranil® (clomipramine); Norpramin® (desipramine); Serzone® (nefazodone); Desyrel® (trazodone) | Drowsiness, dizziness; increased risk for overdose |
| Diabetes | Micronase® (glyburide); Glucophage® (metformin); Orinase® (tolbutamide) | Rapid heartbeat, sudden changes in blood pressure; convulsions, coma, death |
| Heartburn, indigestion, sour stomach | Tagamet® (cimetidine); Axid® (nizatidine); Zantac® (ranitidine); Reglan® (metoclopramide) | Rapid heartbeat, sudden changes in blood pressure (metoclopramide); increased alcohol effect |
| Infections | Grisactin® (griseofulvin); Flagyl® (metronidazole); Macrodantin® (nitrofurantoin); Septra® (sulfamethoxazole); Nydrazid® (isoniazid); Seromycin® (cycloserine) | Rapid heartbeat, sudden changes in blood pressure; liver damage (isoniazid) |
| Muscle pain | Soma® (carisoprodol); Flexeril® (cyclobenzaprine) | Drowsiness, dizziness; increased risk of seizures; increased risk for overdose |
| Nausea, motion sickness | Antivert® (meclizine); Atarax® (hydroxyzine); Phenergan® (promethazine) | Drowsiness, dizziness; increased risk for overdose |
| Pain such as that from headache, fever, muscle ache, arthritis; inflammation | Aspirin (salicylates); Advil®, Motrin® (ibuprofen); Tylenol®, Excedrin® (acetaminophen); Vioxx® (rofecoxib); Celebrex® (celecoxib); Naprosyn® (naproxen) | Stomach upset, bleeding, and ulcers; liver damage (acetaminophen); rapid heartbeat |
| Seizures | Klonopin® (clonazepam); phenobarbital; Dilantin® (phenytoin) | Drowsiness, dizziness; increased risk of seizures |
| Severe pain from injury; postsurgical care; oral surgery; migraines | Fiorinal® with codeine (butalbital and codeine); Darvocet-N® (propoxyphene); Vicodin® (hydrocodone); Percocet® (oxycodone) | Drowsiness, dizziness; increased risk for overdose |
| Sleep problems | Restoril® (temazepam); Prosom™ (estazolam); Somnex® (diphenhydramine) | Drowsiness, dizziness |
| | Herbal preparations (Chamomile, Valerian, Lavender) | Increased drowsiness |