



## Always Read the Label: Food Can Change the Way Your Medication Works

What you eat and drink can affect the way your medicines work. A food-drug interaction can prevent a medicine from working the way it should, cause a side effect from a medicine to get worse or better, or cause a new side effect. A medicine can also change the way your body uses a food. Any of these changes can be harmful. Here are some common factors that could affect the performance of your medication:

### Taking Medication on an Empty Stomach

Some medicines can work faster, slower, better, or worse when you take them on a full or empty stomach. On the other hand, some medicines will upset your stomach, and if there is food in your stomach, it can help reduce the upset. If you don't see directions on your medicine labels, ask your doctor or pharmacist if it is best to take your medicines on an empty stomach (one hour before eating, or two hours after eating), with food, or after a meal (full stomach).

### Drinking Alcohol While Taking Medication

The way your medicine works can change when:

- you swallow your medicine with alcohol.
- you drink alcohol after you've taken your medicine.
- you take your medicine after you've had alcohol to drink.

Alcohol can also add to the side effects caused by medicines, particularly drowsiness. It can also cause serious long-term effects with some medications. You should talk to your doctor about any alcohol you use or plan to use.

### Grapefruit Juice

It's common to see a warning about grapefruit juice on a pill bottle. One way it can cause a problem is by increasing the absorption of certain drugs, especially many cholesterol medications. Grapefruit juice can also cause the body to metabolize drugs abnormally, resulting in lower or higher than normal blood levels of the drug. Many medications are affected in this way, including antihistamines, blood pressure drugs, thyroid replacement drugs, birth control, stomach acid-blocking drugs, and the cough suppressant dextromethorphan. It's best to avoid or significantly reduce intake of grapefruit juice when taking these medications.

But why is grapefruit juice of concern and not other citrus juices? Grapefruit juice contains a class of compounds called ...

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## Egg Hunt Preparation and Safety

Are you hosting a Spring Egg Hunt this year? Remember these safety tips to make sure everyone has worry-free fun.



### 1. Practice food safety

If you're using hard-boiled eggs, cook them thoroughly and refrigerate them before and after dying (and hide them two hours or less before the hunt). If you're blowing out the raw eggs and dying the shells, use a straw or choose pasteurized eggs to avoid salmonella exposure. If you're worried about using real eggs, consider replacing them with plastic eggs and hiding toys and treats inside instead.

### 2. Watch out for choking hazards

Avoid filling plastic eggs with any possible choking hazards. Safe options for toddlers include bath toys, stickers, toy cars, hair accessories, sidewalk chalk, and treats like fruit snacks, cereal, and animal crackers. All children — especially those aged five and under — should be supervised when eating candy. For toddlers, avoid hard candy and jelly beans.

### 3. Protect those with food allergies

For kids with chocolate or nut allergies, provide alternatives like popcorn, cheese crackers, gummies, licorice, or marshmallows. Filling plastic eggs with small, safe toys instead of treats can help mitigate allergy-related disasters.

### 4. Avoid outdoor dangers

Before hiding eggs, walk through the area and remove hazards such as garden tools, hoses, and chemicals. Create boundaries to keep kids from wandering too far.

### 5. Keep animals safe

If pets are joining in on the fun, be sure to keep chocolate, Easter grass, and plastic out of reach. Remind children not to feed candy to dogs.

*Adapted from [Safewise](#)*

... furanocoumarins, which act in the body to alter the characteristics of these medications. Orange juice and other citrus juices do not contain these compounds. In other words, it's not the fact that grapefruit is a citrus that causes a problem. It's about a different nutrient altogether.

### Green Leafy Vegetables

Blood-thinning drugs can change the way your blood clots when there's a lot of vitamin K in your system. Eating too many green leafy vegetables, which are high in vitamin K, can decrease the ability of blood-thinners to prevent clotting. But you don't have to give up greens altogether. Problems arise from significantly and suddenly increasing or decreasing intake, as it can alter the effectiveness of the medicine. So eat your greens in consistent amounts. They have a lot of other nutrients which are valuable, so talk to your doctor before cutting them out altogether.

### Salt Substitutes

Patients taking digoxin for heart failure or ACE inhibitors for high blood pressure should be careful with salt substitutes, which most often replace sodium with potassium. If you've got high blood pressure and are trying to limit your sodium intake, you might have replaced regular salt with a salt substitute. With an increased consumption of potassium, the effectiveness of digoxin might be decreased. This also means you should be careful not to overdo foods that are naturally high in potassium, like bananas and some leafy greens. And those taking ACE inhibitors might already see a significant increase in blood potassium levels, as these drugs are known to increase potassium. Not everybody experiences these side effects so you may still be able to consume these foods, just make sure to discuss it with your doctor.

### Tyramine-Containing Foods

High blood levels of the amino acid tyramine can cause an increase in blood pressure. Several medications interfere with the breakdown of tyramine, including monoamine oxidase inhibitors (MAOIs) which treat depression, and drugs used to treat the symptoms of Parkinson's disease.

The list of foods that contain this amino acid (which is a natural part of some foods) is lengthy and includes, but is not limited to: chocolate, aged and mature cheeses, smoked and aged/fermented meats, hot dogs, some processed lunch meats, fermented soy products and draft beers (canned and bottled beers are OK). If you're prescribed a drug that comes with a tyramine warning, be sure to discuss which foods to avoid with a doctor or pharmacist—it's not always obvious by reading food labels.

This is by no means a complete list of food and drug interactions. These are just some of the most common. Always speak to your doctor or pharmacist about potential interactions when taking a new medication. Medications do contain warning labels about potential interactions, but it's easy to get overwhelmed by all the information they provide. Make sure you completely understand the potential risks of any medication before you take it.



Recipe of the Month:

### Easy Weeknight Veggie Gnocchi

This veggie-packed gnocchi dish makes for a great dinner – either as a vegetarian main or alongside some grilled chicken.

#### Ingredients

1/2 medium onion, diced  
 2-1/2 cup white mushrooms, sliced  
 3 cloves garlic, minced  
 2 tablespoons olive oil  
 28 oz. can of diced tomatoes  
 1 tablespoon Italian Seasoning  
 1 teaspoon salt  
 2 cups spinach  
 16 oz. gnocchi, uncooked  
 1/2 cup Parmesan cheese, grated  
 Salt, to taste

#### Instructions

Dice onion and slice mushrooms. Mince garlic.

Heat a large skillet with high sides (or stockpot) over medium heat. Add olive oil and saute onions and mushrooms until the onions begin to go translucent (4-5 minutes). Add garlic and saute for another 30 seconds.

Pour in diced tomatoes (including the juice) and add Italian seasoning and salt. Add 2 cups of spinach and carefully stir.

Once spinach wilts, add uncooked gnocchi and stir together. Simmer for 3-4 minutes, until the gnocchi is cooked. Stir in Parmesan cheese and serve immediately.

#### Nutrition per serving (4 servings):

Calories: 264; Fat: 15 g; Carbohydrates: 25 g;  
 Fiber: 3 g; Protein: 8 g; Sugar 3 g

Adapted from [www.superhealthykids.com](http://www.superhealthykids.com)