



TIPS

for Avoiding Drug Interactions

There are three main types of drug interactions: drugs with food and beverages, drugs with dietary supplements, and drugs with other drugs. The following tips will help avoid these types of unwanted interactions.

- ❑ **Whenever you receive a prescription**, make sure you understand what the medication is for, why you are taking it, and how often and how much you should take.
- ❑ **Read the label and prescribing information that accompanies each new drug**, checking for potential interactions with medications you are already taking or foods or beverages to avoid (eg, alcohol) when taking the drug.
- ❑ **Follow the instructions on the prescription label.** Some prescription drugs should be taken on an empty stomach, others with food or water. Dosing at particular times of the day may also be important for some prescription drugs.
- ❑ **Keep a list of all medications and supplements you take**, both prescription and over-the-counter, and share that information with your doctor and pharmacist. Just because some-

thing isn't prescribed doesn't mean it is safe and free of potential interactions.

- ❑ **Use the same pharmacy for all prescriptions.** Pharmacies must keep records of all medications they dispense. If all your prescription drugs come from the same pharmacy, their records will enable them to catch incompatible drug combinations.
- ❑ **Notify your prescribing doctor if your pharmacy changes your prescription from a brand name to a generic drug.** Generic drugs must be bioequivalent to their brand name counterparts, but equivalent does not always mean equal.
- ❑ **Take only those drugs prescribed to you.** With each prescription, doctors and pharmacists can watch for potential drug interactions, but if you take someone else's prescription medication for symptoms similar to yours, you are opening yourself up to unmonitored drug interactions.

This page is part of an ongoing series of practical tips for patients with neurologic disorders. If you have compiled clinically relevant tips that you wish to share, please contact the editor at info@neurologyreviews.com.