

What pharmacists know

by Fuzianna Ibrahim

Advice on prescription instructions

Q: Is it really important to follow the instructions of taking medication after food? What happens if I take my medication without eating any food? Is it okay to take my medication with other drinks instead of water?

A: There are a few reasons for taking medication after food. Some medication can irritate the stomach lining – hence, food can help to protect the stomach lining from the medication's effects.

Another reason for taking medication after food is to slow down the release of the medicine. So, it is always best to follow the given instructions by the doctor.

It is best to chase down your medication by drinking plain water instead of other beverages such as coffee, tea, milk and juices. This is because certain drugs can interact with certain drinks, and may affect the drug effectiveness.

It is also not advisable to take your medication with hot drinks as this may alter the drug's effectiveness. And never, never take medication with alcohol.

Anti-hyperlipidaemic drugs

Q: My father has been prescribed an anti-hyperlipidaemic drug. I would like to know what this medication does.

A: The main goal of anti-hyperlipidaemic drugs is to lower your LDL cholesterol, also known as bad cholesterol, to a level that is enough to lower your risk of developing heart disease or having a heart attack.

The higher your risk, the lower is your LDL level goal – i.e. the higher your dose of medication. There are several types of cholesterol-lowering medications



– including statins, bile acid sequestrants, nicotinic acid and cholesterol absorption inhibitors. Statins are most commonly prescribed as they are effective and well tolerated.

These medications are usually prescribed together with advice on Therapeutic Lifestyle Changes (TLC) – which includes a cholesterol-lowering diet (also known as TLC diet), smoking cessation, increased physical activity and weight management. TLC is recommended to all with elevated LDL.

Vitamin overdose

Q: I took an extra multivitamin by mistake today. Is this 'overdose' harmful?

A: Don't worry. There is no need to panic. The worst thing that can happen is that your urine will be bright yellow for a few hours.

Toxicity due to overdose of vitamins are usually the result of prolonged intake of high doses. Always follow the recommended daily intake levels. Overdose on certain vitamins and minerals such as Vitamin A and iron can be harmful to health. **OH!**

Pharmacist Fuzianna Ibrahim (R Ph.MMPS) has over 25 years' experience as a pharmacist. She is currently managing an independent pharmacy in Damansara Heights.

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