



How to avoid medicine interactions covered in latest *MedicinesTalk*

If you are taking a medicine – whether it is a prescription, over-the-counter or complementary medicine – there's a chance you may experience a medicine interaction. This is because any of these types of medicine can interact with each other, and with some foods and drinks.

The latest edition of *MedicinesTalk* looks at what medicine interactions are, what can happen and how to avoid problems.

“Sometimes the active ingredients in different medicines interfere with each other. The result can be one medicine working more strongly or less effectively than expected, or it may make you sick. Interactions are usually minor but occasionally they can have a significant effect on the body,” NPS CEO Dr Lynn Weekes said.

The effects of medicine interactions can range from mild unexpected side effects to serious problems.

“Experiencing an interaction does not necessarily mean you have to stop the medicine. In some cases interactions may be dealt with by simply adjusting a dose, however this needs to be done in close consultation with your doctor or pharmacist,” Dr Weekes said.

Interactions are most likely to occur when you start taking a new medicine, stop taking a medicine or increase the dose of a medicine so you should watch out for unexpected symptoms in the first few days. In particular, older people, people with chronic illnesses and young children are more likely to experience interactions.

“Most medicine interactions are well known, so you can minimise your chances of having an interaction by telling your doctor or pharmacist about *all* the medicines you are taking. That way any potential interactions can be taken into account when recommending a medicine for you,” Dr Weekes said.

Telling your health professionals about all your medicines is easier if you have an NPS Medicine List, which can be downloaded for free from www.nps.org.au. Keep it in your wallet or handbag, so you have it on hand whenever you need it.

If you think you may be having a medicine interaction, talk to your doctor or pharmacist, or if it's serious, contact your nearest hospital.

Also in this edition of *Medicines Talk*:

- What information is on a prescription? How to understand what's written
- Treating the symptoms of a common cold
- When to take a vitamin or mineral supplement

To view the articles go to www.nps.org.au/consumers/publications/medicines_talk

ENDS

Media enquiries to Katie Butt, NPS Media Adviser, 02 8217 8667 or kbutt@nps.org.au

*Independent, evidence-based and not-for-profit,
NPS enables better decisions about medicines and medical tests.
We are funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing.*