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**Holiday Health**

**Practice Medication and Alcohol Safety This Holiday Season**



You've probably seen this label or something like it on a medicine bottle. During this time of year, many people will use medicines for colds, allergies, and other illnesses.

Alcohol can have negative effects if used with some over-the-counter medicines. Also, some people may be on long-term medications that interact with alcohol. Here are some common medicines and their interactions:

Brand Name Drug	Generic Drug	Possible Reactions with Alcohol
Advil®	Ibuprofen	Upset stomach, bleeding, ulcers
Allegra®	Fexofenadine	Drowsiness, dizziness
Coumadin®	Warfarin	Bleeding or blood clots
Flagyl®	Metronidazole	Upset stomach, vomiting
Glucophage®	Metformin	Low blood sugars
Lipitor®	Atorvastatin	Liver damage
Tylenol® (and any product containing Acetaminophen)	Acetaminophen	Drowsiness; dizziness; risk of overdose
Vasotec®	Enalapril	Dizziness, fainting, changes in heart beat

This is just a small list of medications that should not be combined with alcohol.

And for some medicines, alcohol must be avoided at all times, not just when you take the medication.

Medications can work and be safe for you when they are used in the right way. Not all medicines are impacted by responsible use of alcohol. Ask your pharmacist or health care provider to make sure alcohol doesn't cause problems with your medicines.

**Alcohol: The Other Drug**

You might be surprised to learn that alcohol itself is a drug. Anyone who has had a drink or two knows how alcohol affects the brain. But it can cause more health problems than you might imagine, such as:

- Upset stomach, drowsiness, and dizziness.
- Increased risk for other hazards like heart problems or difficulty breathing.
- Health conditions such as organ damage, a weakened immune system, and even cancer.

Alcohol is part of our culture and society, and it can be used and enjoyed responsibly. In fact, studies have shown that alcohol in small amounts can provide some benefits such as reducing fat build-up and raising "good" cholesterol levels. So, "if some is good, more is better," right? Not really. A little alcohol can be beneficial, but too much puts your health at risk. With alcohol, "a little goes a long way."

**Tips for avoiding holiday weight gain**

- ❖ *Control portions:* Set a daily limit on soda and holiday goodies.
- ❖ *Do not fast:* If you fast before a large holiday meal, you will be more likely to overeat.
- ❖ *Slow down:* It is hard to tell when you are full if you eat too fast.
- ❖ *Snack healthy:* Include options like a fruit or vegetable tray to balance holiday treats.

## Reducing Holiday Stress

Even if the holiday season is your favorite time of year, there are probably moments when you feel stressed about shopping, preparing meals, and social obligations. Here are a few tips to help you prevent and reduce stress so that your holidays may be a little more relaxing and enjoyable.

Set a budget for gifts. Make a list of what you want to buy for friends and family. Determine if the total amount is manageable before you start shopping.

Volunteer. Although time may be tight, you may find that taking a few hours to help the less fortunate gives you a sense of peace and fulfillment at this time of year.

Stay active. Exercise releases chemicals in the body that reduce stress. Try parking farther away from the door at the mall or walking around your neighborhood.

Give yourself a break. Don't put so much pressure on yourself to have a perfect holiday that you don't even enjoy it. Set realistic goals, and ask for help when you need it.

## Alcohol Myths Debunked



Many myths exist when it comes to alcohol. Some of these myths even seem realistic and believable. Whether these myths come from chats at the bar or conversations at social gatherings, it is important to get the truth about how alcohol really affects your body. The chart below lists some common myths and facts about the effects of alcohol.

The Myths	The Facts
Liver disease is the only risk of drinking.	Although liver disease is one important health risk, heavy drinking can also increase your risk of diabetes, high blood pressure, stroke, and certain cancers.
There are health benefits to moderate and heavy drinking.	Heavy drinking has no health benefits. Drinking in moderation may have some health benefits such as increasing HDL (good cholesterol), but moderation is the key. Heavy drinking weakens the heart in the long term and causes other issues.
Heavy drinking does not have lasting effects on the brain.	Heavy drinking can actually shrink the size of brain cells and reduce overall brain mass. This contributes to negative effects on memory, learning, mental abilities, mood, and sleep.
Consuming alcohol and caffeine at the same time is always safe.	While you might think that having a cup of coffee or caffeinated soda will help you stay alert during or after drinking, this is actually a false sense of security. Caffeine masks the cues your body may give you about how intoxicated you are, which puts you at risk for driving under the influence or making other hazardous decisions.
Most binge drinkers are alcoholics.	Most people who binge drink are casual drinkers who sometimes consume too much. This is a type of alcohol abuse and can lead to alcoholism.
In the US, more alcohol is consumed in moderation rather than during binging.	According to the Center for Disease Control, 75% of the alcohol consumed in the US is consumed during binge drinking (4 or more drinks on one occasion for women, 5 or more drinks for men). Binge drinking is a risk factor for a number of concerns including heart attack, injury, unplanned pregnancy, violence, and suicide.
Women can tolerate alcohol just as well as men can.	Alcohol hits women harder than it hits men. Even if a man and a woman weigh the same, the same amount of alcohol will be more concentrated in the woman's body because her body will tend to have a lower water content, so there will be less water to dilute the alcohol. Also, men and women metabolize alcohol differently.



Manatee County Government's Center for Health & Lifestyle Management \* [www.ManateeYourChoice.com](http://www.ManateeYourChoice.com)

### Manatee Health Disclaimer

The information in this newsletter is not a substitute for medical advice. It is for reference only and should not be used to determine treatment for your specific medical conditions—only a health care provider can do this. You should seek prompt medical care for any specific health issues and consult your physician regarding the use of over-the-counter products to treat any medical condition or consult your physician regarding the use of prescription or over-the-counter products to treat any medical condition or before starting any new diet, fitness, or supplement regimen.

**Prescription Benefit Manager:**  
**Prescription Solutions, Inc.**  
**For: Manatee Health Network**  
**Bradenton, Florida**

**Prepared by:**  
**Pharmacy Healthcare Solutions, Inc.**  
**P.O. Box 101632**  
**Pittsburgh, PA 15237**

**Editor: Melissa Sherer Krause, Pharm.D.**  
**Contributors:** Christopher K. Williams, Pharm.D.,  
 Sarah E. Lee and Michael White, PharmD Candidates  
**Designer: Linda Richardson**