

Medication Safety Tips

✓ **Learn your medications and always carry an updated list with you.**

Know the medication name, dose and why you are taking it. Also learn if it interacts with other medications, food or alcohol.

✓ **Take your medications exactly as prescribed.**

If medications are not taken properly they may not work as intended. Do not stop taking a prescribed medication before talking with a doctor. There are some drugs that cannot be stopped suddenly.

✓ **Do not ignore side effects.**

Talk to your doctor if you feel that the medication is not helping or if you are experiencing bothersome side effects.

✓ **Use the same pharmacy.**

Going to one pharmacy allows you to know your local pharmacist. They will know the history of your prescriptions and can provide you with information including side effects and possible medication interactions.

✓ **Check with a pharmacist before taking any over the counter, non-prescription medications or herbal supplements.**

They may contain ingredients that interfere with your prescribed medications.

✓ **Do not keep old medications you no longer use.**

You can ask your pharmacy to dispose of unneeded medications. Do not throw them in the garbage or down the sink or toilet.

✓ **Plan ahead for holidays or travel.**

Allow enough time to obtain medications. Check to see if you have refills. You may need to get a new prescription. Give yourself two weeks before a medication runs out. Have enough medications to last over long weekends and holidays. When travelling, ensure you have enough medications for the entire trip and keep your medications in your carry-on.

Common Warnings for Patients on Cardiac Medications

❖ **Grapefruit and grapefruit juice can interact with certain cardiac medications**

Eating grapefruit or its juice (fresh or frozen) can increase the effects of some medications.

This is because there are some substances in grapefruit that can interfere with the way your body absorbs and breaks down (metabolizes) certain medications. This interference allows a higher amount of the medication than usual to circulate in your bloodstream, which can occasionally result in serious or life-threatening adverse reactions.

As little as one glass of grapefruit juice can cause an increased medication level and the effects can last for 3 days or more. Therefore, even if you drink the juice in the morning and do not take your medication until bedtime, the level of the drug in your blood could still be affected.

The effects vary from one person to another and from one drug to another. This results in an unpredictable increase in blood drug level, which in some cases can cause serious effects.

Sour oranges, such as Seville, may have an effect similar to grapefruit juice. Most other citrus fruits, such as lemons, limes, citrons, naturally sweet oranges and tangerines are not thought to have this effect.

Common cardiac medications that interact with grapefruit juice:

Statins (Atorvastatin, Simvastatin, Lovastatin)
Anti-arrhythmics (Amiodarone, Propafenone)
Blood thinners (Apixaban, Rivaroxaban, Ticagrelor, Clopidogrel)
Beta-blockers (Carvedilol, Atenolol)
Calcium channel blockers (Amlodipine, Verapamil, Felodipine, Nifedipine)
Eplerenone
Tolvaptan
Sildenafil, Tadalafil

This is not a complete list – please check with your pharmacist before eating grapefruit.

❖ **NSAIDs (Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs) should be avoided in cardiac patients**

NSAIDs should be avoided because they can increase blood pressure and the risk of heart attacks and strokes. They are not recommended for patients who have had a heart attack or heart failure.

Examples of NSAIDs:

Ibuprofen (Advil), Naproxen (Aleve), Diclofenac (Voltaren), Celecoxib (Celebrex)

PLEASE NOTE: Aspirin is an NSAID but it is NOT included in this warning.