

## Foods can sabotage drug effectiveness

COLLEGE PARK, Md. — It's a bitter pill to swallow: American consumers spend about \$16 billion on medicines each year, without necessarily purchasing better health.

An estimated one out of every three consumers unwittingly follows up medicines with foods that sabotage drug effectiveness, according to Dr. Tamara Vega, a nutritionist with The University of Maryland cooperative extension service.

Vega warns: "People assume that once they've swallowed their medicine, they're on the road to recovery. But many drugs either don't work, or won't work as well, when combined with certain foods."

Typically, says Vega, food and beverages interfere with the absorption of medicines into the bloodstream.

The calcium in milk, cheese and yogurt, for example, slows down the absorption of tetracycline, significantly reducing the healing

power of the common antibiotic.

More serious, however, are the dangerous side effects that some combinations of food and medicine can trigger.

Mixing anti-depressant drugs such as Marplan and Nardril with aged cheeses and hearty red wines, for example, can be fatal. These foods are rich in tyramine — a protein which can cause sudden and severe elevations in blood pressure when combined with the monoamine oxidase inhibitors

present in these drugs.

Despite the obvious risks involved, communication about diet-drug hazards is spotty. According to statistics from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, approximately 35 percent of all patients treated with prescription drugs receive no warning information from either their physician or pharmacist.

To safeguard against any adverse reactions, Vega recommends never "leaving the doctor's office without first asking about potentially dangerous food-drug combinations and the timing of doses."

As for over-the-counter medicines, always read and follow the label information and package inserts.

For additional protection, Vega also advises following these guidelines — unless your doctor advises otherwise:

— Take antibiotics on an empty stomach, either one hour before meals or two hours after meals. Food in your stomach stimulates the release of stomach acid, which compromises drug effectiveness.

— Do not take drugs with soda

pop or fruit juices. These acidic beverages cause many drugs to dissolve in the stomach — instead of in the intestines where they can be more readily absorbed.

— Take aspirin with food. This will lessen stomach irritation.

— Do not increase your intake of foods rich in vitamin K (liver, broccoli, and other dark green, leafy vegetables) while taking anticoagulants. Vitamin K promotes blood clotting and may undermine the anticoagulant effects of drugs such as Coumadin and Panwarfin.

— Never mix alcohol with antihistamines, especially if you're driving or using machines. The combination causes drowsiness. It's also critical to avoid alcohol when taking sedatives, sleeping pills, tranquilizers and particularly barbiturates. Combined indiscriminately with alcohol, these drugs can be fatal.

— Take special care to see that your diet is well balanced when taking medicine. Taking drugs, even on a short-term basis, frequently interferes with the body's ability to convert nutrients into usable forms.

## Proper equipment can provide safe outdoor play for children

Media — Sunny days are too inviting to keep children indoors. With proper equipment you can help them channel their energy into outdoor play that is both fun and good exercise. Check all play equipment to make sure it's safe—free of nails, splinters, glass and rough, broken or rusted edges, advises Maryetta Dorricott, Delaware County cooperative extension service home economist. Sand down wooden equipment to remove splinters and give the

wood a protective coating of linseed oil. Inspect play equipment often and repair or discard any hazardous pieces.

Jumping activities are good for children ages two to five. You can cover an old mattress with heavy plastic for a place to jump. Be sure the plastic is fastened securely and cannot be removed by the children. Or, paint large, flat rocks in bright colors and place them in a circle so the children can jump, sit or walk from one to the other.

For climbing, jungle gyms are a challenge. But the strong wooden or metal pipe rungs must be close enough to each other so children can manage safely. Try suspending a knotted rope—knots at 18 inches apart—from a well-braced frame.

Another good climbing challenge is the sawhorse. Heights ranging from 19 inches to three feet are suitable for young children and sawhorses come in various widths. For climbing sawhorses or boxes, a ladder or a "walking board" can be used. A ladder can be metal, rope or wood, but it must be light and sturdy enough to be moved and dragged easily by children. A walking board is merely a wooden plank with cleats attached to the bottom, about 6 inches from the ends. The cleats on the board and cleats or hooks on ladders keep them from slipping when they are leaned against other equipment.

You can also let your children help you garden with their own child-sized durable tools—shovels, rakes, trowels, hoes and watering cans.

Other recommended toys for two- to five-year-olds include lightweight balls—eight to 24 inches in diameter—short and long jump ropes, wagons, trikes, trucks or tube tires, slides and packing boxes.

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## Salem Co. 4-H Fair to feature sheep competition

ELMER, N.J. — Salem County 4-H Fair will be featuring a set of wool breed sheep competition classes Thursday evening, August 9. Lambs, yearlings and aged classes of long wool white and colored rams and ewes will be open to Salem County adults and youths as well as residents from other counties. Special awards will be made to 4-H members competing.

The classes are sponsored by the Wool Sheep Breeders Association of New Jersey which has invited Lou Rosen, a Pennsylvania sheep breeder for several years, to judge.

For more information, please contact the Salem County Extension Service, R.R. 2, Box 347, Woodstown, N.J. 08098, or Sally Smith, R.D. 3, Box 420, Elmer, NJ 08318.

## Centre County 4-H leaders

The Centre County 4-H Leaders met on July 23 in the 4-H Youth Building on the Grange Fairgrounds at Centre Hall.

Plans for the August 20, combined 4-H Roundup were reviewed. A question and answer period was held.

Each leader also shared a

favorite dessert as part of a dessert smorgasboard before the meeting.

Any leaders interested in the Leaders Form at Columbia Inn, Columbia, Md. on October 18-21 should contact the extension office for more information.

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