

BOOMERS & BEYOND

Safety first before mixing drugs

Billions of people across the globe take medications each day. Certain medications can help people with potentially debilitating or even deadly conditions live normal lives, while others can help people overcome relatively minor issues like muscle aches or seasonal allergies.

The American Heart Association notes that mixing drugs can produce unexpected side effects. This can make it dangerous for people already on prescription medications to use over-the-counter drugs for issues like headache or seasonal allergies. Understanding the potential interactions between their prescriptions and common prescription and over-the-counter medications can help people stay safe.

• **Antihistamines:** Antihistamines are widely used to alleviate symptoms of the common cold or seasonal allergies, such as runny nose, itchy eyes and sneezing. The AHA notes that, when taken along with blood pressure medication, antihistamines can contribute to an accelerated heart rate and cause blood pressure to spike. The AHA also cautions people taking sedatives, tranquilizers or prescriptions to treat high blood pressure or depression to consult their physicians before taking antihistamines.

• **Bronchodilators:** Bronchodila-

tors relax and open the airways in the lungs and are used to treat various lung conditions, such as asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, or COPD. These drugs make it easier to breathe and are available via prescriptions. But patients with heart disease, high blood pressure, thyroid disease, and/or diabetes should discuss the potential interactions between bronchodilators and other medications they may be taking with their physicians.

• **Cordarone:** According to Drugs.com, Cordarone is used to treat potentially deadly abnormal heartbeats. Cordarone can cause severe problems that affect the lungs, thyroid or liver, and can be dangerous when combined with other drugs. For example, the AHA notes that patients who take more than 20 milligrams of Zocor, a drug used to lower “bad” cholesterol and potentially to lower the risk of stroke, heart attack and other conditions, while also taking Cordarone are at risk of developing rhabdomyolysis. Rhabdomyolysis is a condition marked by the breakdown of muscle tissue that can lead to kidney failure or death. The AHA also says that Cordarone can inhibit or reduce the effects of the blood thinner Coumadin.

• **Nicotine replacement products:**



People taking prescriptions for depression or asthma should consult their physicians before taking any nicotine replacement products. The Federal Drug Administration notes that doctors may want to change dosages of patients’ current medications before recommending they take any nicotine replacement products. The FDA also advises people to speak with their physicians before trying these products if they have diabetes, heart disease, asthma or stomach ulcers; have had a recent heart attack; have high blood pressure but do not take any medication for it; or have a history of irregular heartbeat.

Drug interactions can complicate treatment of various conditions. People currently on medication are urged to speak with their physicians before taking any new medicines, including over-the-counter drugs.

Finding Fresh Food

Many of us haven’t been eating right lately. Sometimes the stores are out of what we want; sometimes we can’t get an available pickup time. But there are a few other safe options for getting what we need.

Community Supported Agriculture: Farmers near you like to know in advance if their crops will have a market once it’s time to harvest, and they sell “subscriptions” that allow you, as a shareholder, to pick up fresh food once a week. Do an internet search for “community supported agriculture” in your area. Look for ones that sell more than just vegetables. Some also have eggs, butter, bread, jams, flowers and meat.

Farm Stands: You’ll see these along the road -- a small farmer or gardener who sells his produce at the end of the driveway out of a small stand. Stop and take a look, and ask questions. Most of them will have a limited variety, but it will all be fresh, probably

picked just that morning. You might have to point to the items you want so they don’t have people touching the food. That’s a safety point you’ll appreciate. Ask about other foods that will be available, and make it a point to stop by.

Farmers Markets: These could be a dozen or more farmers who congregate in specified town locations on certain days, each with a stall or table. They will likely have a specialty, with carrots and plants here, and honey and potatoes there. Many will have homemade goods such as breads and jams, and some will have meat in coolers. Chances are you’ll be asked to use a credit, EFT or EBT card to keep from handling cash. Some vendors will have their items prewrapped so they’re untouched.

And remember, no matter where you go, look for marks on the ground for places to stand six feet apart.

Rising Food Costs

Have your food expenses gone up recently? Even if your local grocery isn’t spiking the prices, it’s now costing more to get what we need.

Grocery delivery: Delivery prices are running to \$10 and more in most places. Usually those involve a personal shopper who selects your items from your list and delivers them to your door. Sometimes they’ll call while shopping to inquire about alternative items. Typically the store will have a minimum purchase amount.

Pickup: Even if you go to the store to pick up your

groceries, there’s a fee, typically between \$5 and \$10. Granted, a store employee has gone around the store picking up the items you chose online, but it does add to the cost. Again, there’s a minimum purchase amount.

There is another option: Meals on Wheels. If you’re having trouble accessing food, Meals on Wheels has received new temporary guidance from the government, and the qualifications have changed. At this point if you’re over age 60 and staying home to avoid the virus, or if you’re under age 60, have a disability and live

with someone who receives Meals on Wheels, you may qualify for help.

One of the requirements is being at nutritional risk. If you can’t get what you need from a store or can’t afford the additional costs, you may qualify.

If you’re staying home to avoid the virus and can’t afford food delivery, you may qualify.

It’s worth asking about, surely. At this point Meals

on Wheels groups across the country are receiving cash donations, grants and federal funding, and volunteers are flooding in. So if you ask for help, you won’t be taking away from others who might also need it.

To find the Meals on Wheels in your area, call the senior center, Agency on Aging or look online for Meals on Wheels in your state.

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