

Mixing Alcohol and Prescription Medications

Combining alcohol and medications—both over the counter and prescription—can cause dangerous side effects, increase the power of the medication to the point of overdose, or render the medication ineffective. Specific side effects of common medications are listed below.

Use the guide to understand the most common risks associated with mixing alcohol and the medications you are taking and make a plan to keep yourself safe from negative side effects. This guide does not include all medications or all side effects. Always consult your doctor about alcohol's effect on your medications and find more information at www.niaa.nih.gov.

Mental Health Medications

Anxiety and Epilepsy

Including:

Ativan, Klonopin, Paxil, Valium, Xanax

Common Side Effects:

Slowed or difficulty breathing; impaired motor control; unusual or erratic behavior; memory problems; liver damage; drowsiness, dizziness; increased risk for overdose.

Bipolar Disorder

Including:

Depakene, Depakote, Eskalith, Lithobid

Common Side Effects:

Tremors; increased risk for side effects like restlessness, impaired motor control; loss of appetite; stomach upset; irregular bowel movement; joint or muscle pain; depression; liver damage; drowsiness, dizziness.

Anti Depressants

Including:

Abilify, Anafranil, Celexa, Clozaril, Cymbalta, Desyrel, Effexor, Elavil, Geodon, Invega, Lexapro, Luvox, Nardil, Norpramin, Parnate, Paxil, Pristiq, Prozac, Remeron, Risperdal, Seroquel, Serzone, Symbyax, Wellbutrin, Zoloft, Zyprexa

Common Side Effects:

Slowed or difficulty breathing; impaired motor control; unusual or erratic behavior; memory problems; liver damage; drowsiness, dizziness; increased risk for overdose.

Sleep Problems

Including:

Ambien, Lunesta, Prosom, Restoril, Sominex, Unisom

Common Side Effects:

Slowed or difficulty breathing; impaired motor control; unusual behavior; memory problems; drowsiness, sleepiness, dizziness; increased risk for overdose.



Physical Health Medications

Seizures

Including: Barbiturates, Dilantin, Horizant, Kepra, Klonopin, Lamictal, Lyrica, Neurontin, Phenobarbital, Tegretol, Topamax, Trileptal

Common Side Effects:

Drowsiness, dizziness; increased risk for seizures; unusual or erratic behavior and changes in mental health (such as, thoughts of suicide).

Antibiotics for Infection

Including: Acrodantin, Flagyl, Grisactin, Nizoral, Nydrizid, Seromycin, Tindamax, Zithromax

Common Side Effects:

Fast heartbeat, sudden changes in blood pressure; stomach pain, stomach upset, vomiting, headache, or flushing or redness of the face; liver damage.

Diabetes

Including: DiaBeta, Diabinese, Glucotrol, Glucophage, Glynase, Micronase, Orinase, Tolinase

Common Side Effects:

Abnormally low blood sugar levels; nausea; vomiting; headache; rapid heartbeat; sudden changes in blood pressure; weakness

Over-the-Counter Medication/Other

Ache, Pain and Fever

Including: Advil, Aleve, Excedrin, Motrin, Tylenol

Common Side Effects:

Stomach upset, bleeding/ulcers; liver damage; rapid heartbeat

Nausea, Motion Sickness

Including: Antivert, Dramamine, Phenegan

Common Side Effects: Drowsiness, dizziness; increased risk for overdose.

Blood Clots

Including: Coumadin

Common Side Effects:

Occasional drinking: internal bleeding
Heavier drinking: internal bleeding or possible blood clots, strokes or heart attacks.

Muscle Pain and Tension

Including: Flexeril, Soma

Common Side Effects:

Increased risk of seizures; increased risk for overdose; slowed or difficulty breathing; impaired motor control; unusual or erratic behavior; memory problems; drowsiness, dizziness.

Severe Pain and Migraines

Including: Darvocet-N, Demerol, Fiorinal with codeine, Oxycodone, Percocet, Vicodin

Common Side Effects:

Slowed or difficulty breathing; impaired motor control; unusual behavior; memory problems; increased risk for overdose.

Attention Deficit

Including: Adderall, Concerta, Ritalin

Common Side Effects:

Impaired concentration; increased risk for heart problems; liver damage: dizziness, drowsiness.

Cough

Including: Delsym, Robitussin

Common Side Effects: Drowsiness, dizziness; increased risk for overdose.