

PENNY SAVER NEWS

Jan 1, 2015

BY: Mary A. Keith, Ph.D., L.D.
Food, Nutrition and Health Agent

Avoid Complications for the New Year

I hope by now you have opened the presents, enjoyed some wonderful meals with your family and friends, and have brought in the New Year in grand style. This is no time to put a damper on your celebrations with suggestions to start a diet. But it might be a very good time to remind you that some holiday treats could be reacting with your medications!

Most people know about the grapefruit and statin connections. But there are other foods connected to the holidays that can also have unexpected results. Did you have any cranberry sauce? Banana nut bread? Cheese? Chocolate? Read on!

Statins are drugs that help to bring down our cholesterol levels. Like all medications, they don't stay forever in our systems. Our liver's job is to break them down and get rid of the pieces. But there is something in grapefruit that blocks the liver from doing that. So, if we eat grapefruit, limes, pomelos, bitter oranges (Seville oranges), and starfruit, the statins keep building up in our blood. There's at least one suggestion that pomegranates might do the same thing. The medications can actually get to the point of being toxic.

Something in grapefruit and probably the other fruits can also react with some heart medications, causing the heart to beat too fast or too slow. Some of the medications that are affected are actually for controlling heartbeat. Some reactions can cause blood pressure to drop too low, or allow feet and hands to swell because fluid is building up. And some antihistamines, as well as anxiety, antidepressant and anti-clotting drugs are also affected.

Check with your doctor or pharmacist before you indulge in grapefruit or the other fruits in the list above. With some medications the effects can last for hours, even after just a small glass of juice. There is hope on the horizon however. Researchers at University of Florida are developing some hybrid grapefruit that don't have the compounds that react! The other fruits will have to wait.

What about cranberries and ginger? The FDA warns us that bright red holiday cranberries will react with the common blood thinner medication warfarin. Most of the cases reported have occurred when people had been drinking several glasses of cranberry juice a day. They ended up hospitalized

with excessive bleeding. Stick to just a small glass a day if you use warfarin. And while a little bit of ginger in a pumpkin pie won't make a difference, a box of gingerbread cookies or pot of ginger tea may be enough to raise your risk. Enjoy the aroma and stay home with your family.

Another surprising reaction is what walnuts can do to thyroid medication. Something in walnuts will bind to levothyroxine (sold as Synthroid® too) and prevent it from being absorbed. Too many walnuts means you won't be getting the full dose of your medication. If you always eat walnuts and your doctor has adjusted your medication so that you have the right level in your blood, you're okay. But don't sit down in front of the TV with a bag of walnuts to snack on! And skip the walnut fudge, walnut cookies and glazed walnuts that are not on your usual menu.

In addition, there is a long list of various antidepressants, antibiotics and drugs for fungus infections that can react with lots of foods, from avocados, bananas and chocolates to soy sauce and yeast. If you've just started on any of these types of medications, pull out that information sheet that comes with it. Look for information on interactions, both with food and with other medications. It's better to skip the cheese or chocolate than to end up extra sick during the holidays!

Here's a delicious bread to wake to in the morning, and bananas don't react with any of the medications. May all the rest of your New Year be happy and healthy!

Whole Wheat Banana Bread

1 C all-purpose flour	1 C whole wheat flour
1 tsp baking soda	$\frac{3}{4}$ C sugar
1 egg, lightly beaten	2 Tbsp margarine, melted
3 large ripe bananas, mashed	$\frac{1}{4}$ C milk
1 tsp salt	

Preheat oven to 350°F. Grease a 5x9 inch baking pan. Mix flours, salt and baking soda in a small bowl. In large bowl combine bananas, egg and sugar and mix well. Stir in melted margarine. Add flour mixture and stir until not lumpy. Stir in milk. Spoon into prepared baking pan and tap gently to remove large air bubbles. Bake 1 hour. Cool in pan for 10 minutes, then remove from pan and finish cooling on rack. Serves 10.

Hillsborough County Extension is a cooperative service of Hillsborough County Board of County Commissioners and the University of Florida.

The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) is an Equal Employment Opportunity Institution authorized to provide research, educational information and other services only to individuals and institutions that function with non-discrimination with respect to race, creed, color, religion, age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, national origin, political opinions or affiliations. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Cooperative Extension Service, University of Florida, IFAS, Florida A. & M., University Cooperative Extension Program, and Boards of County Commissioners Cooperating.