[IMAGE]

7 Supplements That Interact With Lipitor

And Why You Should Be Talking to Your Doctor About Any Drugs and Supplements You're Taking

By Drs. Todd Mexico and Brandon Blood

According the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) nearly 50 percent of Americans are currently taking prescription drugs. This number is likely not a surprise to anyone reading this article; just consider how many drug commercials you see on TV every night. Despite the growth of alternative medicine, particularly in the past several decades, the "a pill for every ill" concept is alive and well in our society.

Medications by their very nature impact the delicate biochemical orchestra that takes place in our bodies. These medications obviously are intended to improve the function of a given system, but we all know that medications have negative side effects as well. Since many people also take one or more nutritional supplements (particularly multivitamins), it's also important to recognize that many medications interact both positively and negatively with supplements. Whether you're taking medication, nutritional supplements, both, or neither, it's of vital importance to understand this relationship and ensure that you, your family, your friends and everyone you know understands it. Let's take a look at one of the most widely prescribed prescription drugs, Lipitor, as an example:

Blender - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark Lipitor, a stain drug, led all pharmaceutical sales in 2008, grossing $7.8 billion in sales. Lipitor is the most commonly prescribed medication for high cholesterol levels. The purpose of this article is not to call into question the effectiveness of Lipitor - although clearly it and all medications have potential safety issues, as evidenced by the extensive list of warnings/side effects listed on every bottle; rather, it is to highlight the fact that this medication is very commonly prescribed and carries various biochemical side effects, and that several nutritional supplements may affect the intended action of Lipitor when taken in combination with it. Please be sure to check with your health care provider prior to taking these or any other nutritional supplements.

How Supplements Can Improve Lipitor's Performance

CoQ$_{10}$: CoQ$_{10}$ synthesis is impaired by Lipitor. This side effect is common, as Lipitor reduces the production of CoQ$_{10}$, which is an important enzyme involved in energy production. Lipitor is also known to cause reduced energy levels, so supplementation with CoQ$_{10}$ may be recommended for patients taking Lipitor to help restore enzyme depletion caused by this drug and to help combat decreased energy levels.

garlics - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark **Carnitine:** This amino acid may provide a synergistic lipid-lowering property when combined with statin drugs. Some research has shown that L-carnitine helps to break down low-density lipoprotein ("bad") cholesterol.

Garlic (*Allium sativum*): Garlic may increase Lipitor's effectiveness, in that it is thought to reduce cholesterol levels because it contains certain compounds [s-allyl-cysteine (SAC), s-ethyll-cysteine (SEC), and s-propyl-cysteine (SPC)] that inhibit the production of cholesterol in the liver.

Fish Oil: Omega-3 fatty acids may improve lipid profiles when combined with statins. Fish oil contains large amounts of omega-3 fatty acids (EPA and DHA). These fatty acids are anti-inflammatory and help to reduce overall triglyceride levels.

Selenium: May enhance the cholesterol-lowering effect of Lipitor. Low selenium levels have been linked to hypercholesterolemia; increasing your selenium levels could therefore reduce your risk of high cholesterol.

How Supplements Can Interfere With Lipitor's Performance

Magnesium: May Interfere with Lipitor's absorption. For this reason, it's important to take the drug and supplement at different times during the day (at least two hours apart). Talk to your doctor for additional information.

Vitamin B3 (Niacin): This is a tricky one, as niacin may also increase high-density lipoprotein ("good") cholesterol and is often beneficial for patients taking Lipitor. However, too much niacin may lead to an increased risk of rhabdomyolysis (rapid breakdown of muscle fibers resulting in the release of muscle fiber contents into the bloodstream) when taken with Lipitor.

Better Safe Than Sorry: Talk to Your Doctor First

vitamins - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark The findings above are not inclusive of the potential drug-nutrient interactions involving Lipitor; they are just a sample of the information that has been

researched. It is important to analyze *all* of the medications and nutritional supplements that we consume for possible beneficial and negative interactions. Of course, if you're not taking medication, these interactions aren't going to be a problem, which emphasizes that you should do a few things anytime your primary care physician prescribes a medication for any condition: 1) Ask about nondrug alternatives (in the case of Lipitor, evidence suggests good nutrition and consistent exercise can both improve cholesterol levels); and 2) If you must take medication, always inquire about potential side effects and tell your doctor about any nutritional supplements you may be taking. As you can see, if you have to take medication, certain supplements may actually help the drug's performance, while some may hurt. Either way, it's worth talking about with your doctor first.

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