

HEALTH ALERT!

Drug Interactions: What You Should Know

(NAPSA)—With nearly three billion prescriptions dispensed each year, a growing choice of non-prescription medicines and the increased use of dietary supplements, the potential for drug interactions is increasing.

If you take several medicines, see more than one doctor or have certain health conditions, you and your doctors need to be aware of all the medicines you take to avoid drug interactions. Drug interactions can occur when two or more drugs react with each other or even when drugs react with foods or beverages. Drug interactions may also occur when an existing medical condition makes certain drugs potentially harmful.

Drug interactions may make your drug less effective, cause unexpected side effects or increase the action of a particular drug. Some drug interactions can even be harmful. Reading the medicine label or package insert *every time* you use a nonprescription or prescription drug and taking the time to learn about drug interactions may be critical to your health. If you still have questions after reading the drug product label, ask your doctor or pharmacist for more information.

Remember that different over-the-counter (OTC) drugs may contain the same active ingredient. If you are taking more than one OTC drug, pay attention to the active ingredients used in the products to avoid taking too much of a particular ingredient. Also, make sure you know what ingredients are contained in the medicines you take to avoid possible allergic reactions. Under certain circumstances—such as if you are pregnant or breast-feeding—you should talk to your doctor *before*



Product ingredients may change, so be sure to read the label every time you take medicines.

you take any medicine.

You can reduce the risk of potentially harmful drug interactions and side effects with a little bit of knowledge and common sense. Talk to your doctor or pharmacist about the drugs you take. When your doctor prescribes a new drug, discuss all OTC and prescription drugs, dietary supplements, vitamins, botanicals, minerals and herbals you take, as well as the foods you eat.

To help consumers better understand drug interactions and how to avoid them, the Council on Family Health, in cooperation with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the National Consumers League, has released an update of its free consumer guide, ***Drug Interactions: What You Should Know***. To order single copies, write to: Federal Consumer Information Center, Item #600G, Pueblo, CO 81009, or call 1-888-8PUEBLO. For bulk copies, write to: Council on Family Health, "Drug Interactions," 1155 Connecticut Ave., NW, Suite 400, Washington, DC 20036; or order online at www.cfhinfo.org.