



Important Drug and Food Information

From the Clinical Center, National Institutes of Health
Drug-Nutrient Interaction Task Force

Important information to know when you are taking any of the following drugs:

Monoamine Oxidase Inhibitor (MAOI) Medications:

- Phenezine (Nardil)
- Tranylcypromine (Parnate)
- Isocarboxazid (Marplan)
- Selegiline (Eldepryl) only in doses above 10 mg/day

*There can be a dangerous interaction between your medicine and tyramine, a substance found in some foods and beverages. For this reason, **you must follow these dietary instructions from the day you start taking an MAOI medicine until 3 to 4 weeks after you stop taking it.***

Tyramine is found in foods that are fermented, aged, or spoiled. Normally, an enzyme (called monoamine oxidase) in your digestive tract keeps tyramine levels within a safe range. But when you take an MAOI medicine, this enzyme can no longer work on tyramine. When tyramine levels increase, they can cause potentially serious reactions such as severe hypertension (high blood pressure), headaches, heart problems, nausea, vomiting, visual disturbances, and confusion. For this reason, you will need to avoid eating foods containing significant amounts of tyramine.

1. DO NOT EAT ANY OF THE FOLLOWING FOODS (these foods contain >6 mg tyramine/serving)

- All aged and mature cheeses. (The only cheeses that are okay to eat are: cottage cheese, cream cheese, ricotta, part-skim mozzarella, and processed cheeses like American, if refrigerated for no more than 2 to 3 weeks).
- All improperly stored meats, fish, and poultry. See details under Guidelines section.
- Air-dried sausages such as pepperoni, summer “dry” sausage, salami, pastrami, and mortadella.
- Fermented soy products including soy sauce, teriyaki, soybean paste, fermented bean curd (fermented tofu), miso soup, tamari, natto, shoyu, and tempeh.
- Sauerkraut.
- All tap beers.

- The following foods are rarely eaten in the U.S., so you may not be familiar with them.

Avoid: Fava or broad bean pods, banana peel, Marmite spread.

2. LIMIT TO NO MORE THAN 2 SERVINGS PER DAY, AND ONLY IF APPROVED BY YOUR DOCTOR:

- wine (one serving = 4 oz)
- bottled or canned beer (including non-alcoholic) (one serving = 12 oz)
- liqueurs or distilled spirits (one serving = 1 1/2 oz).

Guidelines

- **All foods that you eat must be very fresh, or properly frozen.**
Store all fresh packaged meat, fish, poultry, and dairy products in the refrigerator/freezer immediately. Eat allowed refrigerated meat products within 3 to 4 days. Eat allowed refrigerated cheeses within 2 to 3 weeks. Avoid foods if you are unsure of their storage conditions.
- **Remember to stay away from combination foods that contain foods to be avoided.** These include items such as cheese crackers, sub sandwiches, stir-fried dishes containing soy sauce, etc. Pizza, lasagna, and other cheese-containing dishes may be eaten *only* if made with “allowed” cheeses and toppings.
- **There are many non-prescription and prescription medicines you must avoid.** Tell your doctor, dentist, or pharmacist that you are taking an MAOI medication before taking any other medicines, either over-the-counter or prescription.
- Be especially aware of diet or weight-reducing drugs; sinus, hay fever, or cold medicines; nose sprays or drops; asthma inhalants or tablets; cough medicines; and herbal stimulants like ginseng and ma huang (ephedra).

If you have any questions about these instructions, ask your pharmacist, dietitian, or nurse.



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This information is prepared specifically for patients taking part in clinical research at the Clinical Center at the National Institutes of Health and is not necessarily applicable to individuals who are patients elsewhere. If you have questions about the information presented here, talk to a member of your healthcare team.

Questions about the Clinical Center?
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