

MAO Inhibitors

This class of antidepressant medication (MAO stands for “mono-amine oxidase, an enzyme that helps metabolize norepinephrine, serotonin, and dopamine in the brain) is seldom prescribed these days because any member of the class may produce a severe hypertensive response when certain foods are ingested (those high in an amino acid called tyramine). Dietary restriction to some degree can be an annoyance in the beginning; once one accommodates to it, however, it becomes second nature. Also, when any member of the class is taken in conjunction with certain other medications, especially those that can produce an adrenalin-like effect or a serotonin response in the brain, a dangerous reaction can occur. Again, though, this caution simply needs to be followed, and one accommodates to double-checking that health-care providers and pharmacists are aware that he or she is taking an MAO when a new medication is added. **NOTE THAT SOME OVER-THE-COUNTER MEDICATIONS FALL INTO THE GROUP OF DRUGS TO AVOID, SO CHECK WITH THE PHARMACIST OR WITH ME OR WITH YOUR PRIMARY CARE PROVIDER IF YOU INTEND TO TAKE ANY NEW MEDICATION, HOWEVER IT IS ACQUIRED.**

Despite these inconveniences, and despite a higher rate of side-effects generally than with other antidepressants, MAO-inhibitors still have their place. A member of this class can be effective for relieving depression when no other medication has been.

DRUGS TO AVOID TAKING DURING THE TIME YOU ARE TAKING AN MAO-INHIBITOR, OR DURING THE FIRST TWO WEEKS AFTER YOU STOP TAKING THE MAO-INHIBITOR.

My favorite site: <http://drugs.nmhi.com/maoi.htm>. Click on “Interactions.”

FOODS TO AVOID TAKING DURING THE TIME YOU ARE TAKING AN MAO-INHIBITOR, OR DURING THE FIRST TWO WEEKS AFTER YOU STOP TAKING THE MAO-INHIBITOR.

My favorite site: <http://www.upmc.com/patientsvisitors/education/nutrition/pages/maoi-diet-facts.aspx>.

WHAT ARE THE MAO-INHIBITOR DRUGS? See either site, above.