

Are you being robbed?

By Nita Dukés

We seem to be a nation that likes to take medicine. And if you do take them, are you aware that a great deal of them take something away from you nutritionally, including vital elements your body really needs, like potassium, Vitamin B 12, calcium, etc.? Even antibiotics are robbers!

As a nurse, I have to list a patient's medications when they come in for treatment. I want to go over some of the medications I see used the most.

First, the drugs used for reflux disease, or GERD. By robbing the body of ALL nutrients, they can be a causative factor in such illnesses as heart disease, increased risk of cancer and pneumonia, high blood pressure, anemia, tooth decay, hearing loss, fatigue, poor vision, and hip fractures and osteoporosis. The FDA has recently issued a warning of low magnesium levels caused by some of them, such as Nexium, Prilosec, Prevacid and Protonix. Using the drugs for more than a year could lead to dangerously low levels that a supplement cannot reverse.

Next, your blood pressure medications could be a factor in heart disease, in causing an irregular heartbeat, memory loss or confusion, frequent infections and autoimmune disorders, to name a few. Some of examples of these medicines are: Enalapril and Lisinopril, Toprol, Procardia, and Norvasc.

Diabetes medications can contribute to such things as fatigue and weakness, memory loss, higher risk of cancer, frequent infections, irregular heartbeat, heart disease, shortness of breath, and hip fractures.

Here's one drug that's a best seller—statins, for your cholesterol. They can contribute to heart disease, fatigue, higher risk of cancer, frequent infections, and vision problem with loss of B vitamins and most minerals.

Chronic use of NSAIDS like Motrin or Aleve can help lead to heart disease, higher risk of cancer and birth defects, depression mouth sores, frequent infections, and low thyroid.

And what if you choose aspirin instead? The loss of six different nutrients can lead to fatigue and depression, osteoporosis, high cholesterol, heart disease, and high blood pressure.

Anxiety medications such as Zanax, Valium and Ativan can contribute to weight gain, insomnia, heart palpitations, and an increased risk of autoimmune disorders.

While we've looked at single drugs and their effects, remember that interactions between drugs and drugs and even drugs and foods can be very serious, sometimes fatal. For example, mixing Norvasc (a blood pressure medicine) and grapefruit could be deadly. Have your drugs filled at one pharmacy and be sure your doctors know all the medicines you're taking.

Speak with your pharmacist about your new medicines and read, read, read the insert that comes with it.

An excellent resource is "Drug Muggers" by Suzy Cohen, RPH, which has just come out in print.

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