Drug Interactions

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If you're using drugs, drinking alcohol regularly or taking methadone while you're taking HIV medicines, you need to know that sometimes these substances interact. It can work both ways. Drugs can make your HIV meds less effective. Or your HIV meds can make you have a bad trip on some drugs. Even worse, some HIV meds can increase the level of drugs or alcohol in your blood so much that you could overdose. This is why it's so important to tell your doctor about all the drugs you are taking. Here are some steps you can take to reduce the risk of having a bad drug interaction:

- Talk to your doctor or a pharmacist about the drugs you take, including methadone. He or she should be able to give you information about any potential drug interactions. Your doctor may recommend changing your HIV treatment to avoid problems.
- Consider switching to drugs that appear to be safe with HIV treatment, such as marijuana.
- If you use drugs after you begin HIV treatment, start slowly. Just half of your usual hit may have the same effect that the full hit used to have. Take a smaller dose of your drug. Wait to see how you feel and how it affects you. Take more only if you need it.
- Some HIV meds decrease the strength of methadone, which means you could go into methadone withdrawal. Check whether your methadone dose needs to be adjusted.

Though not much is known about how HIV meds interact with drugs, alcohol or methadone, it is a good idea to talk to your doctor, nurse or pharmacist about what is known so you can stay as healthy as possible. Also, talk with other people with HIV who use drugs about their experiences and carefully monitor your own.

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