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## Paragon Orthopedic Center

Grants Pass, Oregon

### TAKE MEDICINE WITH FOOD

**And the consequences if you don't.**

You have likely seen this instruction on many of your prescription medications and if getting food into your stomach when you are supposed to take it is a hassle, you might be tempted to ignore it. There are very good reasons why you need to have food in your stomach for certain medicines and the reasons are varied according to the particular medicine.

#### Why Do You Need Food Present?

Food affects the way your body uses that medicine. For example, diabetes medications are taken with food to prevent a drop in blood glucose as the food you eat at the meal is digested. Food initiates digestion and thus some medicines are broken down more quickly in the presence of digestive enzymes that wouldn't be in great numbers if your stomach was empty. Or there are times when an empty stomach can cause the medicine to be absorbed too quickly, so the presence of food slows it down. Sometimes medicine taken on an empty stomach can cause unpleasant side effects such as nausea &/or vomiting, so food creates a barrier. Dr. Bents and Dr. Van Horne frequently tell patients to take ibuprofen or other NSAIDS, which must be taken with food because the medicine taken alone can cause stomach upset and when taken long-term without food can create ulcers. Medicine taken for stomach acid/digestion problems is best taken when food is consumed and those acids are released.

#### How Much is Enough?

It doesn't necessarily mean a full meal, but if it works out that the timing is right for one, then that covers the need. Sometimes a small snack, like crackers or a glass of milk would do. Not all foods are equal. There are some, like grapefruit or some fruit juices, that change how effective your medicine is. Dairy products cause absorption problems for some antibiotics. Since the answers to all of these questions are varied depending on the medicine you're taking, you should educate yourself about your medicine and how it works. Pharmacists are a great source of help for these questions. They can help you understand how much food is necessary and what foods are best to avoid when taking your medicine. Paragon Orthopedic Center encourages you to be active in your healthcare and be your best advocate: speak up, do your research, and ask for help.

The following articles were referenced for this newsletter:

[When and How to Take Medication With Food \(thecalifornian.com\)](https://www.thecalifornian.com)

[Why must some medicines be taken with or after food? - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk)

[The link between medicine and food | World Economic Forum \(weforum.org\)](https://www.weforum.org)