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PATIENT INFORMATION

Foods to Avoid when Taking Monoamine Oxidase Inhibitors (MAOIs)

Information for Patients

For further assistance or to receive this information in a different format, please contact the department which created this leaflet.

What are MAOIs?

MAOIs belong to a group of medicines called antidepressants.

Why should some foods be avoided?

These medicines can react with tyramine, a chemical found in some foods, causing your blood pressure to rise. This can cause unpleasant symptoms such as:

- Violent headache
- Pounding heartbeat
- Stiff neck
- Flushing, sweating
- Sickness and nausea

If you experience any of these reactions whilst taking MAOIs, you should **call 999** for an ambulance or **go to A&E**.

This reaction may be mild but it can sometimes be very dangerous and even fatal. Avoiding foods which have a high tyramine content reduces the risk of this reaction.

It is important to follow these dietary restrictions whilst taking MAOIs and for at least two weeks after your treatment with them has finished.

Check with your pharmacist before buying any medicines, and make sure all healthcare staff treating you, such as dentists, know that you are taking these medicines.

The list below gives an outline of the foods which should be avoided but doesn't cover every food which contains tyramine. If you have questions about other foods, please ask your doctor or pharmacist.

Which foods should be avoided?

Type of food	Specific examples to avoid
Cheese and dairy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cheese: hard, soft, mature, processed or cheese spreads• Any food containing cheese e.g. pizza, cheesy biscuits, sauces and dressings containing cheese• Sour cream
Meats	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Liver• Any meats which have been fermented, aged, or degraded such as salami, pepperoni, hung game• Paté, black pudding
Fish	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pickled fish, smoked fish, shrimp pastes
Yeast and meat extracts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Marmite, Bovril, oxa, gravy granules
Vegetables and fruits	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Broad bean pods (the beans are fine), banana skins• Over-ripe avocados, figs• Sauerkraut (pickled cabbage)
Drinks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Alcoholic drinks, especially beers and lagers. Spirits are generally fine• De-alcoholised drinks (e.g. low alcohol beer, non-alcoholic wine)
Fermented foods	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Flavoured textured vegetable protein (e.g. soya)• Fermented soya bean extract (e.g. tofu), miso
Food supplements	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ginseng
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Any food that has gone off, or is mouldy