

Pepcid AC and alcohol ^[1]

Dear Alice,

My friends take Pepcid AC when they drink to reduce the redness on their faces. Is this safe? I'm worried that it will hurt their stomach linings. Please help.

Thank you,

Red in the Face

Answer

Dear Red in the Face,

No studies have shown that Pepcid AC is effective at treating redness from drinking alcohol, and this is not a use of the medication approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). However, the antacid has not been shown to interact badly with alcohol, nor are there any warnings in its medication information against taking it when drinking alcohol.

Redness or flushing of the face is common when drinking, likely the result of alcohol's effects on the immune system. Although studies have consistently found red wine to cause these reactions most frequently, all types of alcohol can cause redness.

Flushing, which is the sensation of warmth and visible reddening of the skin, often occurs in the face, neck, upper portion of the chest, and upper limbs. Alcohol-related flushing, or Alcohol Flush Reaction, is thought to be produced by the inability to metabolize one of alcohol's by-products, acetaldehyde. Some people of Asian descent may have a deficiency of the enzyme needed to metabolize alcohol, which can cause severe flushing from the buildup of acetaldehyde after alcohol consumption. Flushing may also result from the combination of alcohol and various occupational exposures and the combination of alcohol and other medications. It usually begins three to ten minutes after consuming alcohol and can last about an hour.

More severe symptoms can occur during Alcohol Flush Reaction, such as an itching and swelling rash and ?alcohol induced asthma,? which involves an itchy/runny/stuffy nose, sneezing, wheezing, breathlessness, and coughing. These kinds of reactions occur in a small percentage of the general population.

You're right to be worried about mixing a medication with alcohol, as sometimes the

combination can be extremely dangerous. Though Pepcid AC may not be dangerous to take when consuming alcohol, medications are not recommended for uses other than those approved by the FDA.

Alice!

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Published date:

Aug 16, 2013

Last reviewed on:

Aug 16, 2013

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