



Prepared by the Myasthenia Gravis Association

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Alcohol and MG

Alcohol is a part of many social gatherings, celebrations, and meals. For people living with myasthenia gravis (MG), it's important to understand how alcohol may affect your symptoms, medications, and overall safety.

There is **no universal rule that people with MG must completely avoid alcohol**. However, alcohol can temporarily worsen fatigue, impair coordination, and interact with certain medications commonly used to treat MG or other health conditions. Because MG affects everyone differently, it's important to discuss alcohol use with your healthcare provider.

How Alcohol May Affect MG

Alcohol is a depressant that slows activity in the central nervous system. While alcohol does **not directly cause MG**, it may temporarily make some symptoms more noticeable.

Some people with MG report increased:

- Fatigue
- Muscle weakness
- Double vision
- Drooping eyelids
- Poor balance
- Slurred speech
- Difficulty concentrating

Others may notice little or no change. Individual responses vary depending on disease severity, medications, overall health, and the amount of alcohol consumed.

Alcohol and Your Medications

Many medications used to treat MG—or other medical conditions—may interact with alcohol.

Alcohol may:

- Increase drowsiness or dizziness
- Affect balance and coordination
- Increase the risk of falls
- Worsen medication side effects
- Place additional stress on the liver, particularly when combined with medications metabolized by the liver

Examples of Medications include:

- Pyridostigmine (Mestinon®)
- Corticosteroids (such as prednisone)
- Immunosuppressants (such as azathioprine or methotrexate)
- Sleep medications
- Anti-anxiety medications
- Some pain medications
- Certain antidepressants



Remember

Always read medication labels and ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist whether alcohol is safe with your medications.

Other Considerations

In addition to its effects on muscle strength and medication interactions, alcohol can influence several aspects of health that are important for people living with myasthenia gravis. Factors such as fatigue, hydration, sleep quality, and heat tolerance can all affect how you feel and function each day. Being aware of these potential effects can help you make informed decisions and recognize situations where limiting or avoiding alcohol may be the safest choice.

Fatigue

Alcohol may increase tiredness and reduce muscle endurance, making MG symptoms more noticeable.

Dehydration

Alcohol can contribute to dehydration, which may worsen fatigue and make you feel less well overall.

Sleep

Although alcohol may make it easier to fall asleep, it often reduces sleep quality and may increase nighttime awakenings, leaving you feeling less rested.

Heat

Alcohol can increase blood vessel dilation and contribute to feeling overheated. Because heat may worsen MG symptoms for some people, be mindful when drinking outdoors or in hot environments.

Tips for Safer Alcohol Use

If your healthcare provider says alcohol is appropriate for you:

- Drink in moderation.
- Eat before and while drinking.
- Stay well hydrated by alternating alcoholic beverages with water.
- Avoid drinking when you're already fatigued or experiencing increased MG symptoms.
- Avoid combining alcohol with medications that cause drowsiness unless approved by your healthcare provider.
- Know your own limits and stop if you notice worsening weakness or fatigue.
- Consider alcohol-free beverages when attending social events.

Driving and Safety

Never drive if you are experiencing:

- Double vision
- Blurred vision
- Significant fatigue
- Muscle weakness affecting your arms or legs
- Difficulty keeping your eyes open
- Slowed reaction time

Alcohol can further impair judgment, coordination, and reaction time—even in people without MG.

If you choose to drink, arrange for a designated driver or alternative transportation.

Medical Identification

Consider carrying medical identification that indicates you have myasthenia gravis.

Options include:

- Medical ID bracelet or necklace
- Medical ID smartphone feature
- Wallet medical information card

Medical identification can help emergency responders recognize your condition and communicate with your healthcare team if needed.

When to Contact Your Healthcare Provider

Talk with your neurologist or healthcare provider if:

- Alcohol consistently worsens your MG symptoms.
- You're unsure whether alcohol is safe with your medications.
- You experience worsening weakness after drinking.
- You have liver disease or other medical conditions that may affect alcohol use.
- You're concerned about medication interactions.

Conclusion

Key Takeaways

- Plan ahead and pace yourself.
- Prioritize the celebrations that matter most.
- Accept help from family and friends.
- Schedule time to rest before and after busy events.
- Simplify shopping, cooking, decorating, entertaining, and travel when needed.
- Listen to your body and don't feel guilty about saying "no."
- Meaningful moments—not perfection—are what make life's celebrations truly special.

Helpful Resources

Myasthenia Gravis Association (MGA)

The Myasthenia Gravis Association provides:

- [Support groups](#)
- Educational webinars
 - [Video Library of previous webinars](#)
- Patient education
- [Resource library](#)
- Advocacy opportunities
- Connections to others living with MG

Website: <https://mgassociation.org>

Additional Resources

- Myasthenia Gravis Association (MGA) – Support groups, educational programs, and patient resources
- Myasthenia Gravis Foundation of America (MGFA) – Information about living with MG and medication considerations.
- National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) – Guidance on alcohol use and medication interactions.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) – Information on moderate alcohol consumption and general health.
- Talk with your neurologist or pharmacist if you have questions about alcohol and your medications.

Scientific Sources and Clinical References

- Narayanaswami P, Sanders DB, Wolfe G, et al. International Consensus Guidance for Management of Myasthenia Gravis: 2020 Update. *Neurology*. 2021;96(3):114-122. doi:10.1212/WNL.00000000000011124.
- Myasthenia Gravis Foundation of America. Living Well with Myasthenia Gravis and Cautionary Drugs educational resources.
- National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke. Myasthenia Gravis Information Page.
- National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. Alcohol's Effects on Health and guidance on alcohol-medication interactions.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Alcohol Use and Your Health.
- U.S. Food and Drug Administration. Medication Guides and Drug Safety Communications regarding alcohol-drug interactions.
- Mestinon® (pyridostigmine bromide) Prescribing Information. Bausch Health US, LLC. Current prescribing information.
- Lexicomp® Drug Interactions Database. Wolters Kluwer Health. Alcohol interaction information for medications commonly used in myasthenia gravis.
- Micromedex® Drug Interactions. IBM Watson Health/Merative. Alcohol and prescription medication interaction database.
- American Occupational Therapy Association. Occupational Therapy Practice Guidelines for chronic condition self-management, energy conservation, and activity modification.